

THE Atlantic

FEBRUARY 2002

MONTHLY

OH, GODS!

*An explosion of new religions
will shake the 21st century
by Toby Lester*

DEGREES OF EVIL

*How wicked is
Osama bin Laden?*

THE KEYSTONE KOMMANDOS

*FDR versus eight
hapless Nazis*



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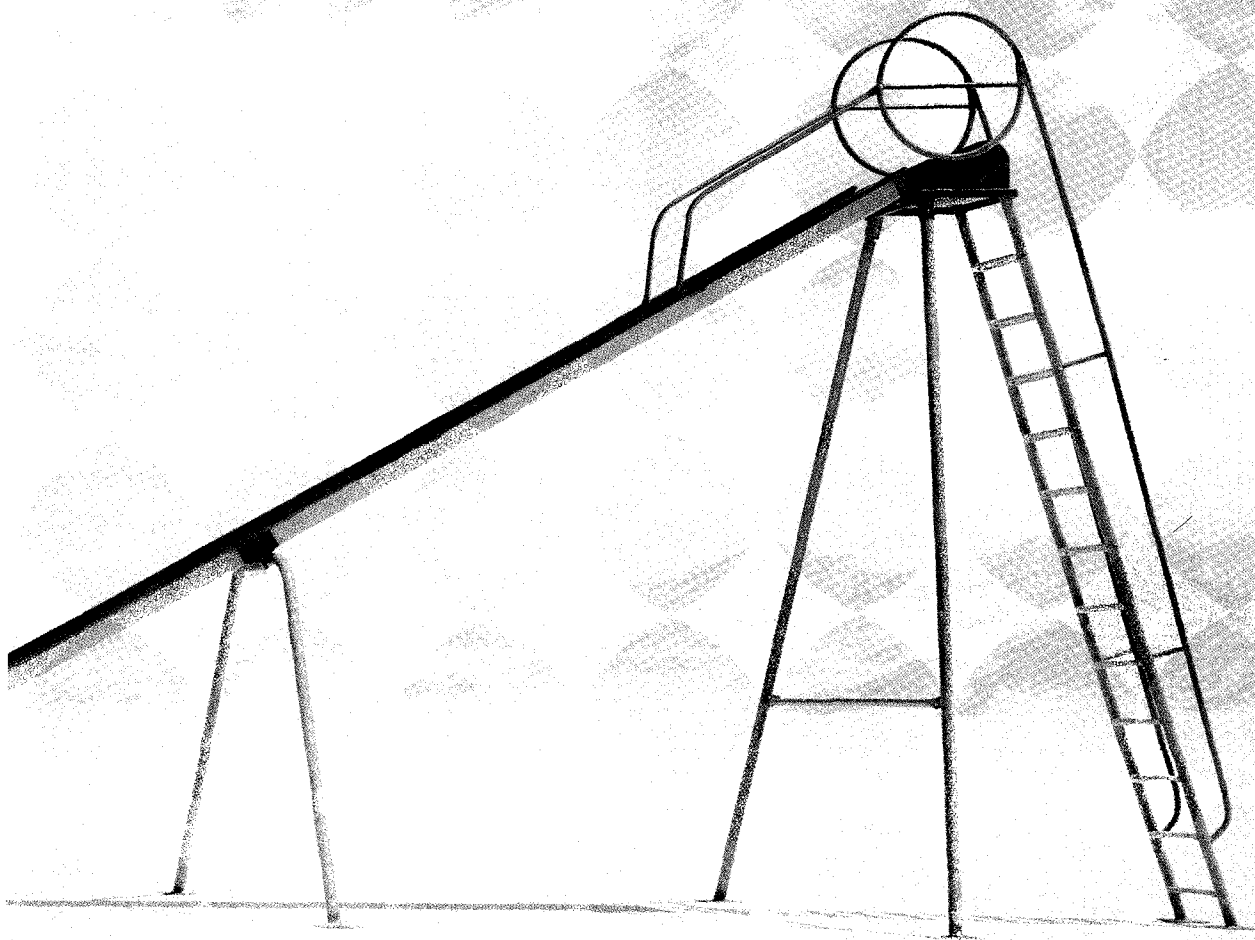


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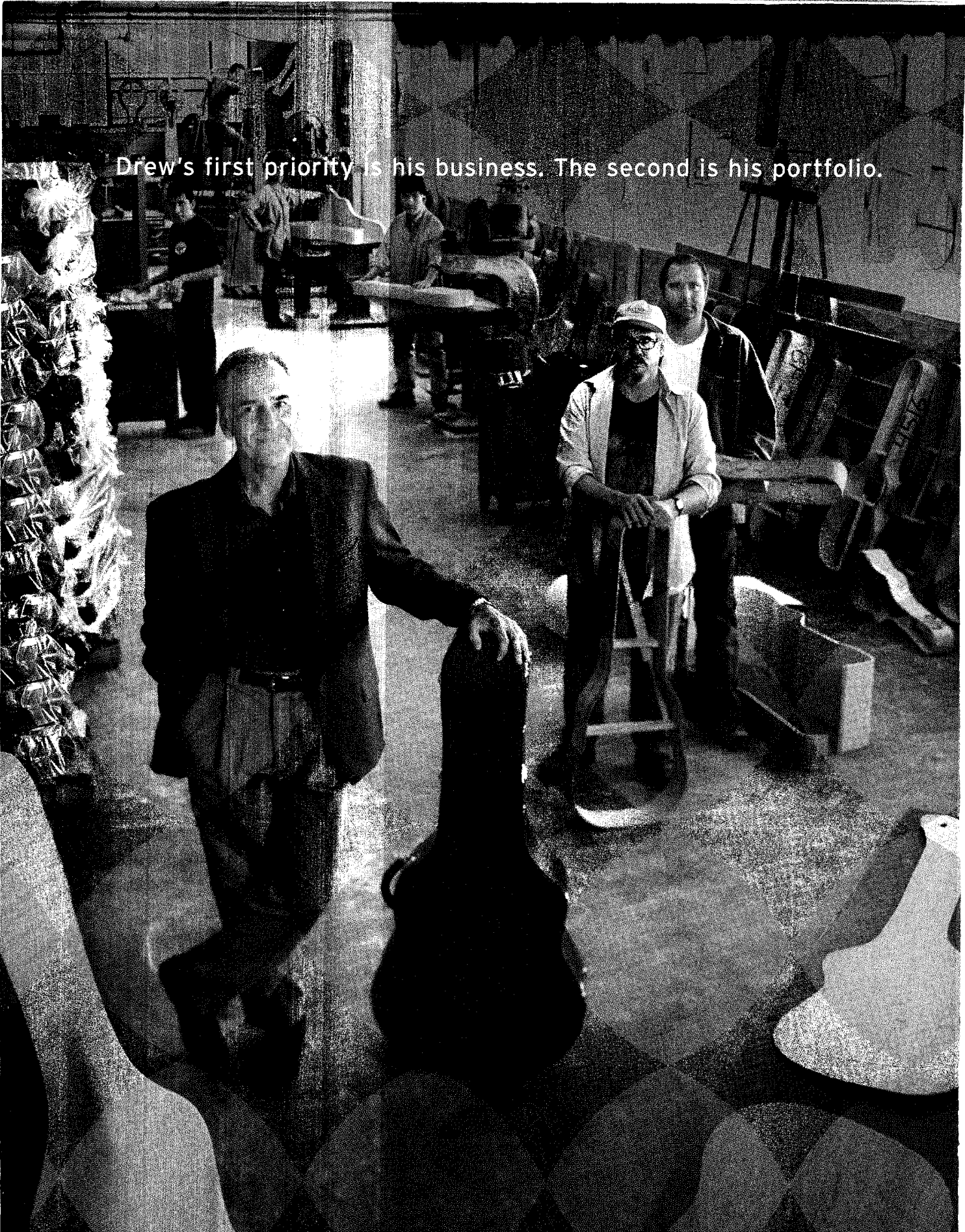
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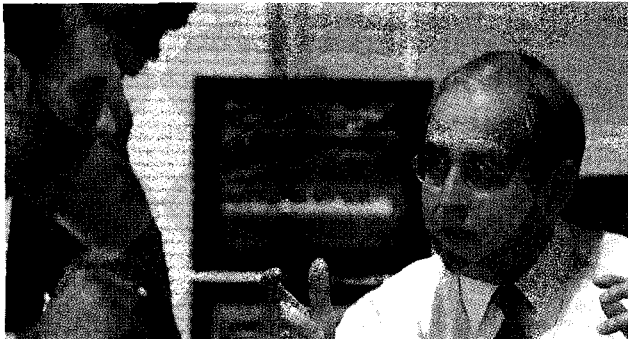


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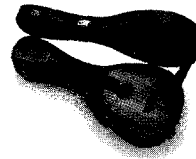
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THE Atlantic

VOLUME 289 NO. 2 / FEBRUARY 2002

- 6** IN THIS ISSUE
12 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
18 INNOCENT BYSTANDER **LIFOSUCTION** *by Cullen Murphy*

THE AGENDA

- 20** Essays by *Michael Kelly, David Brooks, Jack Beatty, Walter Kirn, and Richard A. Posner*. Plus *James Fallows* in Washington, *P.J. O'Rourke* at large, and *Stephen Budiansky* on code breaking
-

- 37** **OH, GODS!**
Religions mutate with Darwinian ferocity. Today we are witnessing an unprecedented explosion of new religions—and the “problem religion” of the next century may not be the one you think *by Toby Lester*
- 46** **THE KEYSTONE KOMMANDOS**
In June of 1942 eight Nazis bent on sabotage were set ashore on American beaches. Their mission came to naught, undermined by confusion and betrayal. The one (inadvertent) accomplishment: creation of a precedent for the military tribunals proposed by the Bush Administration *by Gary Cohen*
- 60** **BEING ABE LINCOLN**
Once a year the country's Abraham Lincoln impersonators gather in conclave. Our correspondent became a Lincoln-in-training *by Joshua Wolf Shenk*
- 63** **DEGREES OF EVIL**
The word “evil” has been tossed about with abandon in recent months. The author, whose work includes an acclaimed study of Hitler scholarship, reminds us that there are hierarchies of wickedness. Where does bin Laden fall? *by Ron Rosenbaum*
- 69** **THE NEXT THREAT TO NATO**
Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have been clamoring for admission to NATO—and the Bush Administration appears receptive. It is a terrible idea *by Jeffrey Tayler*
- 73** **PENUMBRA** *A short story by Beth Lordan*
-

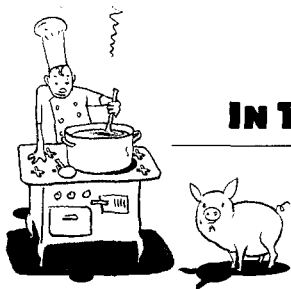
PURSUIITS & RETREATS

- 80** TRAVEL **A SECRET CARIBBEAN** *by Barbara Wallraff*
84 MANNERS **EARLY RISER** *by Joseph Epstein*
87 PALATE AT LARGE **MOORE'S STONE CRAB** *by Corby Kummer*

BOOKS & CRITICS

- 88** **A TERRIFYING HONESTY** On V.S. Naipaul *by Geoffrey Wheatcroft*
93 **WILLIAM KENNEDY'S GREATEST GAME** Roscoe, by William Kennedy *reviewed by Thomas Mallon*
98 **SHEER DATA** Sinclair Lewis: Rebel From Main Street, by Richard Lingeman *reviewed by Benjamin Schwarz*
102 **NEW & NOTEWORTHY** The *Iliad* anew; Ved Mehta on the couch; Andrea Barrett blends exactitude and compassion
107 **KEEPING UP APPEARANCES** Somewhere for Me: A Biography of Richard Rodgers, by Meryle Secrest *reviewed by Wilfrid Sheed*
111 **THE PUZZLER** *by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*
112 **WORD FUGITIVES** *by Barbara Wallraff*

Poetry by Jonathan Musgrove (page 42), W.S. Merwin (page 62), and Jeff Mock (page 78). Cover art by Edward Sorel; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



IN THIS ISSUE

Today's fringe cult could be tomorrow's world religion. **Toby Lester** ("Oh, Gods!") surveys the rapidly evolving landscape of new religious movements. The century ahead, he predicts, will witness a period of unprecedented diversity. Lester, a senior editor of *The Atlantic*, has written two other cover stories for the magazine: "The New Privacy Space" (March 2001) and "What Is the Koran?" (January 1999).

In August of 1942, after a secret trial by a military tribunal, six Nazis were executed by the U.S. government for intent to commit sabotage. The case is being used by the Bush Administration as precedent for military courts in the cause of "homeland defense." **Gary Cohen** ("The Keystone Kommandos") recently delved into more than 3,000 pages of trial transcripts at the National Archives and the Roosevelt Presidential Library, in Hyde Park, New York, to unearth the story of their mission, capture, and trial. Cohen is a former member of the investigative unit at *U.S. News & World Report*.

Joshua Wolf Shenk ("Being Abe Lincoln") reports on a gathering of Abraham Lincoln presenters. Shenk's first book, *The Melancholy of Abraham Lincoln*, will be published next year.

What is evil? **Ron Rosenbaum** ("Degrees of Evil") takes up that ancient philosophical question, and explores the matter of evil's "hierarchies." Rosenbaum is the author of *Explaining Hitler* (1998) and a collection of nonfiction, *The Secret Parts of Fortune* (2000).

Admitting the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into NATO would be a big mistake, writes **Jeffrey Tayler** ("The Next Threat to NATO"). Tayler argues that the region's ethnic volatility could undermine the stability of NATO as a whole. Tayler is the author of *Sibe-*

rian Dawn (1999) and *Facing the Congo* (2000). He is at work on a book about the Drâa Valley, in the Moroccan Sahara.

Beth Lordan ("Penumbra") is the director of the creative-writing program at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She is the author of the short-story collection *And Both Shall Row* (1998). Her story "The Man With the Lapdog," which appeared in the February 1999 *Atlantic*, received an O. Henry Award.

This month in *The Agenda: The Atlantic's* editor, **Michael Kelly**, ponders the return of squareness; **David Brooks**, an *Atlantic* correspondent, wonders why the strongest nation in the world sometimes seems such a wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie; **Jack Beatty**, a senior editor, argues that securing peace will require correcting the West's hypocritical and self-serving approach to globalization; **Walter Kirn** describes the establishment media's warped imagining of the Mountain West; Judge **Richard A. Posner** remarks on the unfortunate willingness of many academics to hold forth on topics they are unqualified to address; *The Atlantic's* national correspondent, **James Fallows**, looks at three civilian innovations that could teach the military a thing or two; our correspondent **P. J. O'Rourke** attends a victory protest; and **Stephen Budiansky** explains how advances in encryption software have rendered code breaking, the intelligence community's most reliable weapon, ineffective.

Many Americans have never even heard of the small French Caribbean islands of Marie Galante and Les Saintes, says **Barbara Wallraff** ("A Secret Caribbean"), and that's a shame, because these islands are *magnifique*. Wallraff, a senior editor of *The Atlantic*, writes the magazine's word columns, Word Fugitives and Word Court.

Joseph Epstein ("Early Riser") describes the simple pleasures and professional advantages of starting the day before dawn. Epstein's new book, *Snobbery: The American Version*, will be published by Houghton Mifflin this summer.

V. S. Naipaul, the winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize for Literature, has been called racist, neo-colonialist, anti-Muslim, and a right-wing reactionary—all for telling the unadorned truth in a politically correct era. So writes **Geoffrey Wheatcroft** ("A Terrifying Honesty") in an assessment of Naipaul's career. Wheatcroft's essays appear regularly in *The Atlantic*.

Thomas Mallon ("William Kennedy's Greatest Game") reviews the novel *Roscoe*, a spirited and engaging tale of postwar municipal politics. Mallon is a novelist and a critic. His new book of nonfiction, *Mrs. Paine's Garage and the Murder of John F. Kennedy*, was published last month.

He never shed his reputation as a second-rate writer, but Sinclair Lewis nonetheless proved to be one of the nation's most astute literary sociologists. **Benjamin Schwarz** ("Sheer Data"), a senior editor, reviews Richard Lingeman's new biography, *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel From Main Street*. Schwarz's most recent article for *The Atlantic* was last month's "A New Grand Strategy," with Christopher Layne.

The details of the composer Richard Rodgers's dispiriting family life may be as surprising as his music is familiar, observes **Wilfrid Sheed** ("Keeping Up Appearances") in his review of Meryle Secrest's revealing biography, *Somewhere for Me*. Two of Sheed's books, *Max Jamison* (1970), a novel, and *The Morning After* (1971), a collection of essays, were recently reissued by The Akadine Press.

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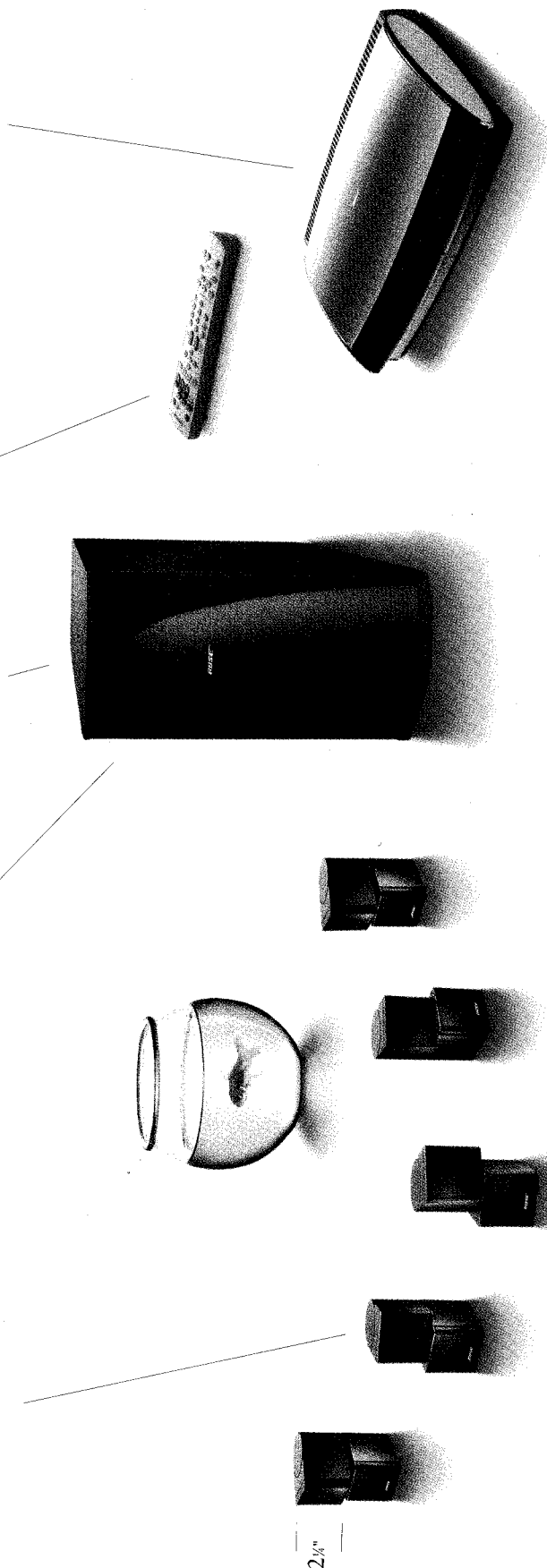
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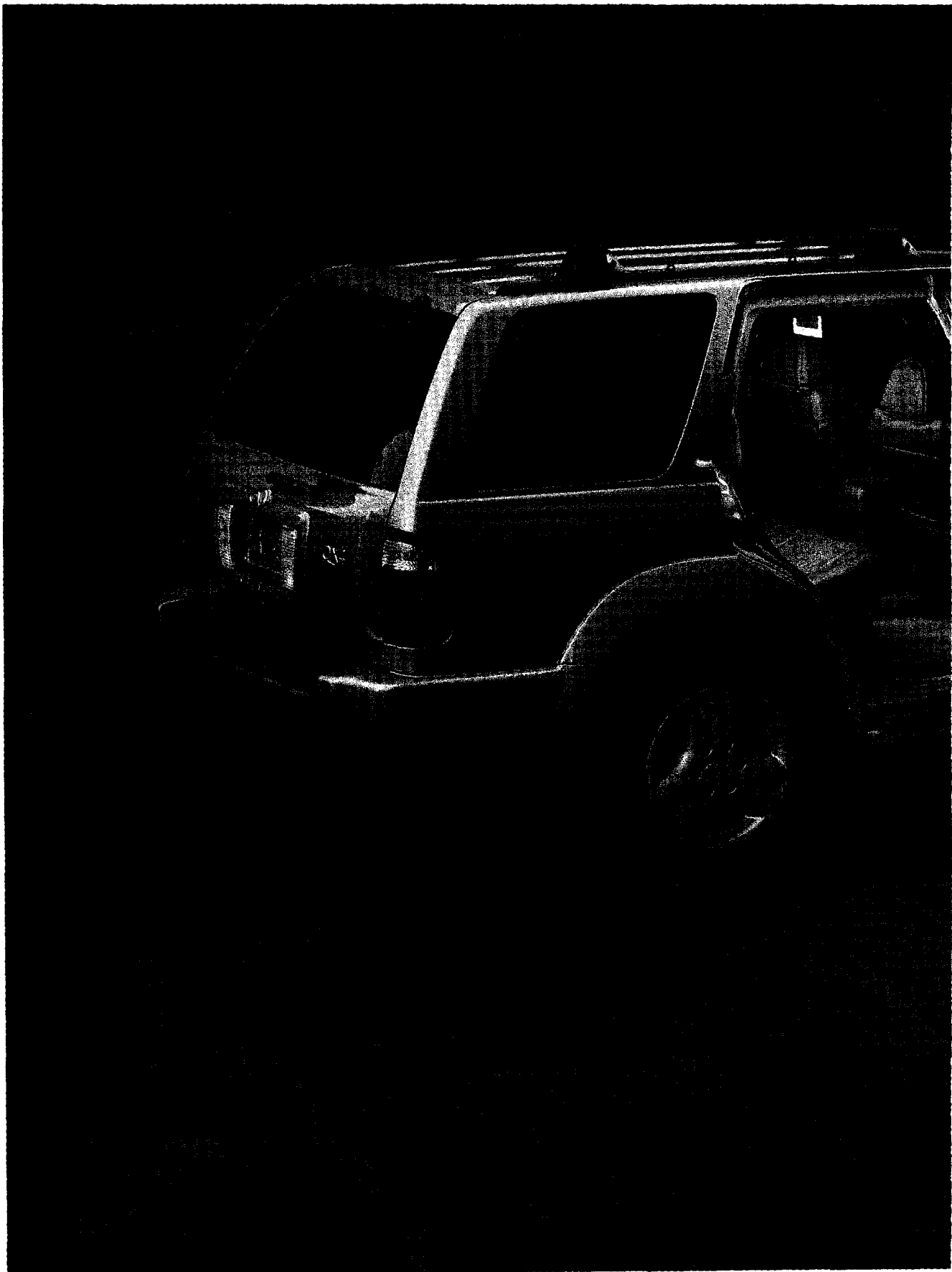


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This month on the Web . . .

Interview: Toby Lester, a senior editor at *The Atlantic*, discusses his article in this month's issue, "Oh, Gods!"

Interview: The author of *Ship Fever* talks about her latest collection of short stories, *Servants of the Map*, reviewed in this issue.

The Archive: *The Atlantic*'s new online archive is a comprehensive collection of more than a century's worth of *Atlantic* articles. Readers can search for material from 1857 to the present and, for a small fee, can view articles in text or as they originally appeared in the magazine.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EgyptAir 990

I read with interest William Langewiesche's "The Crash of EgyptAir 990" (November *Atlantic*) and concluded that the catastrophe might have been the opening salvo in Osama bin Ladin's effort to destabilize the West and in particular the United States. Although such a scenario appeared unlikely in 1999, at the time of the crash, we might easily conclude that the pilot who seized control of the cockpit was rehearsing the action of the hijackers responsible for the September 11 atrocities. Certainly, neither the crew nor the passengers made any effort to prevent the takeover, encouraging bin Ladin and al Qaeda to assume that a programmed hijacking might encounter little or no resistance.

Nelson Marans
Silver Spring, Md.

Why, if the National Transportation Safety Board's "sole purpose is to investigate accidents and issue safety recommendations," does it not suggest or even insist that cockpit recorders of both voice and flight data be provided with backup electrical power, so that voice and flight data can be recorded continuously, for as long as possible?

Such a feature would prevent the problem cited by William Langewiesche: "Because the engines had been cut, all nonessential electrical devices were lost, blacking out ... the recorders, which rely on primary power ..." Such problems have been reported in many accidents but seem entirely avoidable.

John Joss
Los Altos, Calif.

Zion's Vital Signs

I congratulate you on P. J. O'Rourke's fine exposé of life in Israel under the constant threat of terror ("Zion's Vital

Signs," November *Atlantic*). I was particularly pleased to see O'Rourke's exposure of a piece of history that is almost never noted in the national press: the Arabs agreed to the formation of a Jewish state and even signed a treaty, in 1919, with Chaim Weizmann. Let's hope Secretary of State Colin Powell read that article too. He could use a little lesson in history—and a reality check on the threat that Israel continues to face. It's time that Washington publicly noted Yasir Arafat's true goal, as stated in the Fateh constitution: "Complete liberation of Palestine, and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military and cultural existence."

Alyssa A. Lappen
Brooklyn, N.Y.

P. J. O'Rourke refers to Palestinian youths throwing in the "girly" fashion of countries where soccer is played. What appears to those in Baseball Land to be a girlish throw is in fact the more powerful cricket pitch, although I concede that Soccer Land and Cricket Land overlap considerably. This cricket pitch is more powerful because the lever is longer—the fulcrum is the shoulder, and the arm is kept more or less stiff—than in the elbow-and-wrist throw of a baseball pitcher. It allows the typically greater shoulder musculature of a male (so much for girlishness) to be used to greater advantage. What the baseball pitcher loses in power he gains in control of spin, but the cricket pitch has more raw power, and considerable talent and experience are required to control it.

Marc A. Schindler
Spruce Grove, Alberta

As a member of that extremely small but peaceful group the godless, whose leading light is truth, I must protest P. J. O'Rourke's pinning Hitler's Holocaust on us in his rambling about Israel: "We went to Yad Vashem, the

Jerusalem Holocaust Memorial, and saw what the godless get up to."

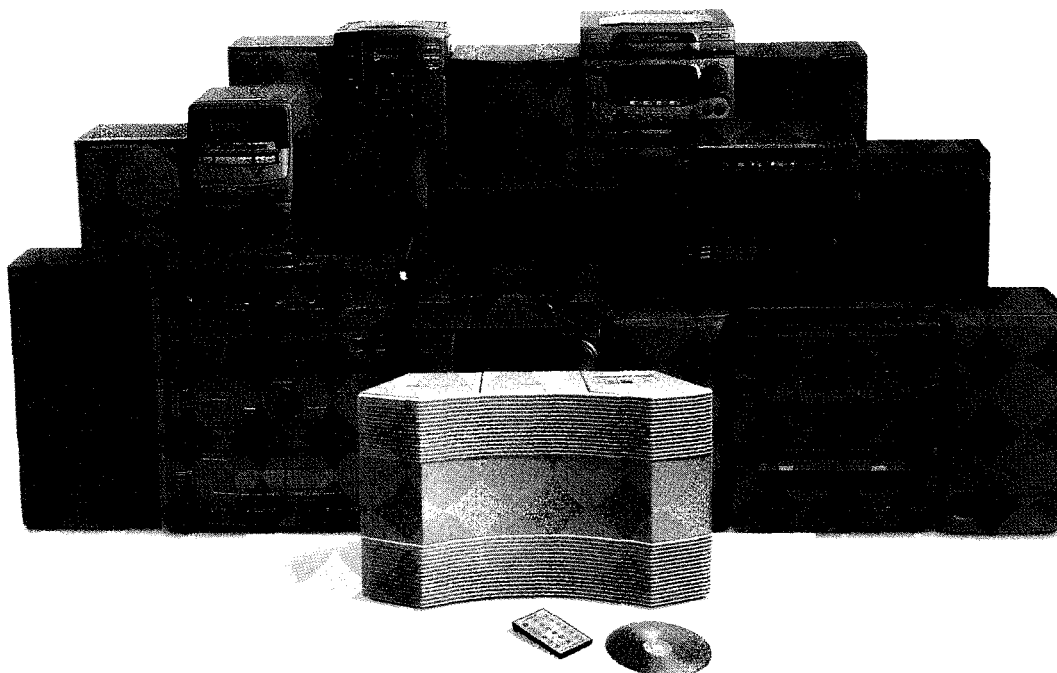
The religious temperament is always quick to disown the products of its peculiar reward-and-punishment systems when eruptions of rage reveal the underside of its ugly psychologies. McVeigh? Oh, he wasn't a Christian! Osama? Oh, he isn't a Muslim! Hitler? Oh, he wasn't a Christian, even if he did make reference to Jesus in some of his speeches. Stalin? Oh, he wasn't raised Christian. We atheists—who, as far as I can see, are nowhere in the world leading a silly war against any group that does not agree with us—deplore such dishonesty.

George Thomas
Spokane, Wash.

P. J. O'Rourke offers astute insights into Israeli society, but with an outsider's flawed smugness. He makes several flip references to the Passover story in Exodus, and in regard to a kosher sushi restaurant he drops a casual "by the way" quotation ("Leviticus 11:10 says, 'Of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you'"), commenting that "gentiles aren't expected to understand the intricacies of dietary law."

By quoting part of this verse out of context and by twisting its syntax, he makes it sound as if Mosaic law forbids the eating of fish in general (as opposed to non-fin fish, which it does forbid). All one has to do is read the verse in full to get the intended meaning. What's going on here? It might be understandable if O'Rourke made such a blatant mistake on some obscure passage of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but Jews and fish? Come on. I called the restaurant he referred to and was assured that they didn't use any squid or shellfish or other forbidden ingredients in any of their dishes.

O'Rourke gives the impression of a disinterested realist reporting on the



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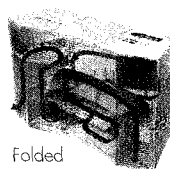
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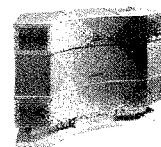
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practical side of Zionism, too sophisticated to care one way or the other about the sectarianism and piety in Israel, and yet he bends over backward to slander a perfectly honest observance, by misquoting Scripture in a most casual tone.

Jeffrey K. Jenkins
Kent, Wash.

P. J. O'Rourke replies:

I can understand how Hitler causes sense-of-humor failure, but why does sushi do so? Fish that aren't cooked yet just ain't kosher as far as this Irishman is concerned. If I "fish" around enough in Leviticus, I can find justification for my views.

American Spectator

The main puzzles about Byron York's piece on R. Emmett Tyrrell and *The American Spectator* ("The Life and Death of *The American Spectator*," November *Atlantic*) are his insistence that they were once witty and intelligent and his puzzlement that Tyrrell would never publish anything at all critical of Ronald Reagan. I first encountered Tyrrell and his mag twenty-six years ago, and I understood instantly both that he was right-wing to the point of being literally hysterical and that he was childishly nasty. (Hendrik Hertzberg's description of his "wit" is right on target.) His ultimately self-destructive anti-Clinton *jihad* was not one bit more irrational than what he had written about every Democrat or liberal he ever encountered.

The magazine wasn't much better. (Odd, for instance, that York never mentions the column Tom Bethell wrote in the magazine throughout its lifetime—in which he declared that the richest American and the poorest one should pay exactly the same amount in taxes, and that the Maryknoll nuns raped and murdered by an El Salvadoran death squad deserved it because they were "bull-dyke socialists.") But then York, as he says, was closely associated with the magazine himself. Like P. J. O'Rourke, who also bailed out after the *Spectator's* scandals became unconcealable, he simply proves that rats will leave a sinking ship even if they helped to crew it.

Bruce Moomaw
Cameron Park, Calif.

I loved your article on the demise of the *Spectator*, a magazine that started as a meanspirited and slanderous yellow rag and continued that way. Does any merit attach to an organization that lived only to attack others' ideas and produced nothing of value on its own? The irony of a "conservative" organization's going out of business because it can't handle having money is too delicious.

I must, however, dispute Byron York's comment that the Troopergate story was valuable. It was garbage, which he would know if he researched the subject rather than taking the *Spectator's* word for it.

Teresa Welby
Clarks Summit, Pa.

I was a classmate of "Bobby" Tyrrell's (Indiana University class of '63) and a member of Dr. James Counselman's Big Ten championship swim team of 1962. Counselman was not inclined to turn down anyone who desired to learn to swim and survived his grueling training discipline. (Doc took his Ph.D. in kinesiology, and he revolutionized the way swimmers train by introducing, for the first time, weight training for swimmers.) All of this is by way of saying that when Bobby (whose persona evolved into "R. Emmett Tyrrell" by some Brobdingnagian stretch of character profiling by "his own self") suggests that he was a "promising" member of the swim team, he is inviting incredulity.

H. Clayton Hebb
Mesa, Ariz.

Byron York should have looked more closely at Bob Tyrrell's claim that he started *The American Spectator* in 1967 as a lone insurgency against a "hard left" SDS student government at Indiana University. In 1967 IU's student government was controlled by the Tryus Party, which won a landslide victory on a promise to arrange spring-break charter flights to the Bahamas. In the 1960s IU students wore ties or white gloves to dinner and discussed politics mainly at "Great Issues Mock Senates" arranged by the faculty. The SDS chapter had roughly a dozen members, several of them undercover FBI agents.

If *The American Spectator* rose and

fell on Tyrrell's skill at selling his delusions to conservative sponsors, the pattern began in Bloomington, where he concocted his first "arrogant" liberal conspiracy and retailed it to the credulous yokels from New York.

Nick Cullather
Department of History
Indiana University
Bloomington, Ind.

Byron York replies:

For years Bruce Moomaw wrote cranky, sometimes amusing letters to the Spectator, telling us all what wackos we were. It seemed then, as it does now, that it was a magazine he loved to hate, so for his sake I'm sorry it's gone. As for Teresa Welby, the Troopergate story was, as I wrote, flawed. But the central allegation—that Clinton used the troopers to facilitate his extramarital affairs—was accurate, and also a pretty good predictor of what would happen later in the White House. As for H. Clayton Hebb's objection to my calling Tyrrell a "promising" swimmer, I interviewed, but did not use quotations from, Dr. Alan Somers, a friend of Tyrrell's who was a member of the 1960 U.S. Olympic team. Somers told me that Tyrrell was able enough but was outshone by several world-class teammates. Finally, on Nick Cullather's statements about the IU student government: During my research I interviewed, but did not quote, Guy Loftman, who was elected president of the IU student body in the 1967–1968 year. Loftman, who was frequently the target of Tyrrell's barbs, was one of the founders of the local chapter of SDS. In our interview he described the campus as "swinging pretty hard to the left" at the time of his election.

Terrorism

In his November editorial on terrorism Michael Kelly mentions the London blitz and Palestinian terrorism as failures of terrorism to achieve political objectives. This is just one theory that fits the available evidence. Another theory is that some acts of terror, such as the Allied bombing of Cologne, Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, or the acts perpetrated by the Irgun (of which Menachem Begin was a member), succeed in their political objectives, whereas others fail. The acts

of terror that succeed are redefined by the winners as not being acts of terror.

David Choweller
Riverside, Calif.

I very much enjoyed Mike Kelly's editorial. Some aspects of it, however, gave me pause. Citing another writer, he makes reference to Hitler's and Stalin's inability to cause populations to "suffer a collapse of will and submit to their persecutors." In fact astoundingly huge masses of people did exactly that. History shows that the huge numbers of people who opposed Hitler and Stalin were absolutely neutralized by fear and public slaughter (terrorism). The reigns of terror of these maniacal usurpers did not end until their deaths, and well after the loss of millions of human lives. Hitler and Stalin were wildly successful terrorists. Mao Zedong's success continues to survive him. He terrorized millions of people, including those in remote and humble villages. Educated people were publicly executed, modern women had their heads shaved in public, roads throughout that vast land were filled with bonfires of Western literature and silk clothing, and the families of the educated and successful were mercilessly and publicly destroyed. Teenagers were armed, and the masses were terrified into submission that continues to this day.

Linda Binkley
Saratoga, Calif.

Terrorism, Michael Kelly tells us, "does not cause a people to 'suffer a collapse of will and submit to their persecutors.'" Well, yes and no. Zionist terrorism in the 1940s certainly caused a collapse in Britain's will to shoulder its responsibilities to the indigenous Palestinians. On the other hand, Israeli terrorism, from Deir Yassin to Sabra and Shatila, has equally certainly failed to cause the Palestinians to submit meekly to their fate.

Jeremy Gilling
Sydney, Australia

Home Schooling

I read with interest Margaret Talbot's review of *Kingdom of Children*, concerning the home-schooling movement

as embodied in the Christian fundamentalist movement in the United States. ("The New Counterculture," November *Atlantic*). My sister exemplifies the thesis that home schooling benefits the mother, who otherwise would have no sanctioned outlet for her intelligence and drive within the constraints of the rigid gender roles imposed by this muscular brand of Christianity.

My sister trained as a teacher. Her children are bright, with good manners and lovely, lively spirits. The five-year-old can already read and do his numbers. However, by the end of their twelve-year home-schooling process they will know nothing about geology. They will know nothing about evolution or natural selection, which are the cornerstones of modern biology, from ecology to genetics and gene mapping. They will speak only English. They will have been taught that their way of belief and behavior is the only way, with no exposure to other cultures, other beliefs, except to be told that those ways are wrong. And that includes not only other systems such as Islam and animism but also Catholicism and, indeed, other kinds of Protestantism, which are also anathema to my sister. Those children will know a great deal about the Second Amendment and nothing about the First, which guarantees freedom of, and freedom from, religion. They will be taught that the United States is a Christian, rather than a secular, nation.

Lisa Lombardi
Brisbane, Australia

The myth that the Home School Legal Defense Association battled for "the legal status" that home schoolers enjoy today has been perpetuated in your review of the book *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*. Margaret Talbot should have reviewed some other sources on the legality of home schooling before reporting the HSLDA's propaganda.

The HSLDA has to justify its existence by spreading the falsehood that it "made home schooling legal." In fact many of the laws that it has helped to enact have eroded freedoms formerly enjoyed by all home schoolers. It has achieved this by working with, or acqui-

escing to, states in placing new restrictions on home schoolers. The HSLDA is trying to make home schooling over into its image of what home schooling should be, and we who do not like that image must resist and set the record straight.

Rachel Kubaryk
Lajas, Puerto Rico

Margaret Talbot presents an incorrect summary of John Holt's work and ideas in her review of the book *Kingdom of Children*. Holt never regarded children as "superior in every way to adults," nor did he advocate a Rousseauvian pedagogy. In *Teach Your Own*, Holt wrote, "Children do often seem to me like talented barbarians, who would really like to become civilized. Many free schools, and some kindly and well-meaning parents, have suffered from the notion that there was something wild and precious in children that had to be preserved against the attacks of the world for as long as possible. Once we get free of this idea we will find our lives with children much easier and the children themselves much happier." Holt advocated sharing our adult concerns and experiences with our children as much as we can, not isolating them from adult society, as Rousseau proposed. Further, Holt wrote extensively about the sorts of things children can participate in to help them learn and grow; he didn't envision children's being left alone to "learn their little hearts out."

Patrick Farenga
President, John Holt Associates Inc.
Cambridge, Mass.

Corrections:

In the editing of Gary Giddins's review of *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin (New & Noteworthy, December Atlantic)* two errors were introduced: Ira Gershwin was given the forename of his brother, George, and a reference to the book *Cole (1971)* was rewritten as *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter (1983)*. Sincere apologies to our blameless reviewer.

An article in the October *Atlantic* ("In Defense of C. S. Lewis") stated that the novel *Kitchen Venom*, by Philip Hensher, "all but glorifies pederasty." The novel in fact features a relationship between an older man and a younger man. We regret the mischaracterization.

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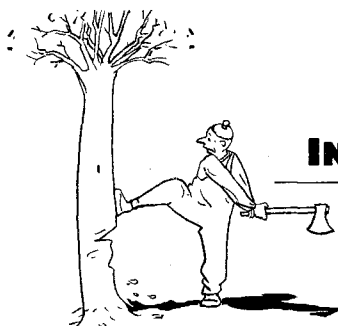


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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

LIFOSUCTION

Even on a résumé, less can be more

.....

Thomas M. Menino, the mayor of Boston, is not a flashy fellow. He gets tongue-tied easily, as many of us do, and he lacks the aura of a Willie Brown or a Rudolph Giuliani. But he is a tribune of the city's neighborhoods and working people, and he was elected to a third term last fall with more than 70 percent of the vote.

One of the few clouds to darken his campaign, and it was a small one, came a couple of weeks before the election, when *The Boston Globe* alleged that Menino had committed a familiar political transgression—tweaking his résumé in a manner inconsistent with the facts. Menino, the *Globe* observed, “has long cultivated an image of himself as a neighborhood kid who spurned college and made good instead by dint of hard work and shrewd politicking.” The newspaper now disclosed that Menino had indeed earned a college degree—an associate’s degree from Chamberlayne Junior College. The degree isn’t mentioned in any of the mayor’s official biographies. When a reporter asked Menino about this achievement, Menino replied, “You’re just trying to dig up dirt on me.”

We are all familiar with the more usual résumé-padding story, whereby a public figure incorporates credentials or accomplishments to which he or she has no honest claim. A recent case in point is that of the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Joseph Ellis, whose anecdotes about military service in Vietnam, offered repeatedly in his Mount Holyoke classroom, turned out to be untrue. There have been many others. The Mayan peasant woman who is presented in the widely acclaimed and supposedly autobiographical book *I, Rigoberta*

Menchú (1984) appears to have invented many of the central details of her personal history. Two years ago the civil-rights leader Paul Parks, an African-American veteran of World War II, was presented with an award by the Berlin chapter of B’nai B’rith for his role in the liberation of Dachau—a role, as it happens, that no one can document and that all evidence contradicts. The actress Sandra Bullock once claimed to have been voted “Girl Most Likely to Brighten Your Day” in high school, though in fact she wasn’t.

Everyone agrees that this kind of cosmetic makeover is wrong. But what

the son of an admiral. During the past decade a cadre of rap musicians, black and white, have presented personal histories presumptively rooted in the violent bleakness of the streets but in truth often rooted in the bedroom communities of New York and Los Angeles. The street cred of the white rapper Vanilla Ice diminished rapidly in the face of allegations involving an affluent suburban high school in Dallas and the birth name Robert Van Winkle.

Lifosuction is often attempted when issues of class are on the line. Bill O’Reilly, the television talk-show pugilist and the



about lifosuction—the removal from one’s biography of innocuous yet somehow unsightly elements that happen to be true? It is a common procedure. Musicians, for instance, have a powerful incentive to make sure that public pose and personal background are appropriately in sync. Jim Morrison, of The Doors, who fashioned himself into an icon of anarchy and self-destruction, never took pains to point out that he was

host of *The O’Reilly Factor*, has stated, “I understand working-class Americans. I’m as lower-middle-class as they come.” *The Washington Post* has noted that O’Reilly grew up in not-exactly-working-class Westbury, Long Island; went to a private college without benefit of financial aid; and holds master’s degrees from Boston University and Harvard. (Also, the “used car” he drives is a Lexus.) The television commentator and newspaper

columnist Mike Barnicle imbues his opinions with the rough-and-tumble attitude of blue-collar Boston. He does not date-line his work "Lincoln," where he actually lives, a wealthy suburb that once made a local road into a one-way street to deter entry by people from an adjacent, working-class town.

Humble origins can be a political asset. William Henry Harrison waged the first presidential campaign with a log-cabin-to-White-House theme; Harrison's supporters ridiculed his opponent, Martin Van Buren, for wearing ruffled shirts and taking baths. In truth Harrison was himself a wealthy man, from a distinguished Virginia family. In acutely class-conscious England the pressure on Labour politicians to bio-vac any sign of privilege has long been intense. Harold Wilson, the Oxford-educated former Prime Minister, cultivated working-class eating habits. In public he smoked a pipe, rather than

the National Autonomous University of Mexico and went on to earn a graduate degree and teach in a Mexican university. His ski mask is probably from Orvis.

It's easy to raise an eyebrow at lifosuction, but hard to be censorious. We all permit ourselves some degree of cosmetic suppression, and we are ambivalent about the ethics. Philosophers and theologians send mixed signals. The Sermon on the Mount cautions against hiding your light under a bushel, and an ancient philosophical tradition warns that wrongdoing can take the form of *not* doing—there are sins of omission as well as of commission. But another long tradition, also going back to antiquity, justifies the sparing disbursement of truth—an "economy of truth," to use the artful locution—in certain circumstances. Edmund Burke once observed, "I do not impute falsehood to the government, but there has

It's easy to raise an eyebrow at lifosuction, but hard to be censorious. We all permit ourselves some degree of cosmetic suppression, and we are ambivalent about the ethics. Philosophers send mixed signals.

the more aristocratic cigars he preferred. In the late 1980s a Labour member of Parliament named Michael Meacher, now Tony Blair's Environment Minister, wished it to be inferred that he was a son of the soil. Then a newspaper pointed out that Meacher's father was actually an accountant who merely had retired to a farm, and suggested that Meacher came from a middle-class background. Middle class! Meacher sued the newspaper for libel. (He lost.)

Another person seeking identification with the rural proletariat is Subcomandante Marcos, the leader of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Photographs always show him wearing a ski mask. Some legends held him to be a former priest, others a veteran guerrilla fighter trained by the Cubans and the Soviets. He turned out to be the son of a prosperous Mexican furniture retailer. He studied sociology and philosophy at

been a considerable economy of truth." He characterized economies of truth as "a sort of temperance."

Rather than discourage lifosuction, perhaps, we should encourage people to subtract even more of themselves from public view than they currently do. Book publishers may complain about a glut of memoirs, but they continue to publish truckloads of them. Every week thousands of people place personal ads in newspapers and magazines—small masterpieces of selective revelation. Millions of people have distilled themselves into personal Web pages.

A case can be made, then, for turning the bio-vac up to "high." To be sure, there may be the occasional gruesome accident. With a moment's inattention the assault on unwanted ripples of biography could cause entire personas—*pfllttt*—to be suddenly sucked into oblivion. Some may see that as too great a risk. I see it as a sort of temperance. ▮

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THE AGENDA

ESSAYS THIS MONTH *on the Afghan war and its home-front consequences; the abhorrent nature of flyover people; three unheralded technological innovations; and the final rout of the code breakers.*

DAVID BROOKS

"America plays at being a realistic nation the same way teenagers play at smoking. We adopt the pose we think makes us look grown up and cynical, but we never quite pull it off." PAGE 22

JACK BEATTY

"Although Dick Armey, the House majority leader, says that helping workers displaced by terrorism is not 'commensurate with the American spirit,' the nation should prove him wrong." PAGE 24

WALTER KIRN

"Since the days of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken, the coastal smart set has relied on the idea of a landlocked dumb set to emphasize its own alleged refinement." PAGE 25

RICHARD A. POSNER

"When academics speak off the cuff, especially about matters outside their areas of expertise, quality tends to go to hell." PAGE 28

JAMES FALLOWS

"Any human being can tell a camel from a car. Designing sensors that can reliably do so is very hard." PAGE 29

P.J. O'ROURKE

"There's always the possibility that the revived fighting spirit among America's elite has nothing to do with Afghanistan but is, rather, a collateral result of Harvard's first undefeated football season since 1913." PAGE 32

STEPHEN BUDIANSKY

"It is now virtually impossible to break the encrypted communication systems available to everyone." PAGE 33

GETTING HIP TO SQUARENESS

We want our virginity back

.....

Can we be square again? We were. Last square half a century ago. Then we were, more or less successively, hep, hip, cool, wild, beat, alienated, mod, groovy, radical, turned on, dropped out, camp, self-actualizing, meaningful, punk, greedy, ironic, Clintonian, and, finally, postmodern, which is to say exhausted—and who can blame us? In all these states we were, first and above all, not-square. Everything was a variation on that; to be seen as clever and even profound you had to be not much more than not square.

Now we are supposed to be square again. No one puts it that bluntly, because square remains the condition that dare not speak its name. Even country music gave up on square, Merle Haggard's 1969 great anthem of square, "Okie From Muskogee," being more on the order of a last defiant gasp than a call to arms. Nevertheless, post-September 11 we are, the surveys say, patriotic, prayerful, serious, and determined. We love our country. We support our President and our armed forces. Our heroes are police officers and firefighters. Our first official war hero was a CIA agent. Well, beat me, Daddy, eight to the bar, as Mamie Eisenhower used to say, this is squaresville.

But is it sustainable? Returning to square seems like re-virginizing. The problem is knowingness. All anti-square postures stand on a base of superior knowingness: Suburban life may look wholesome and sweet, but it is really one vast snake pit tarted up as a gunite swimming pool. George Washington may look like the star of *Founding Father Knows Best*, but really he was

a false-toothed real-estate speculator. Woody Guthrie carries a nice tune, but this land is not your land, unless you are a Trump or a Tisch.

Knowingness, of course, is not knowledge—indeed, is the rebuttal of knowledge. Knowledge was what squares had, or thought they had, and they thought that it was the secret of life. Knowingness is a celebration of the conceit that what the squares knew, or thought they knew, was worthless. In *The Graduate* the career

advice ("Plastics") of a family friend, Mr. McGuire, to Benjamin Braddock, played by Dustin Hoffman, is classic square knowledge. Benjamin's mute disdain toward that advice—and his elaborately played out disdain for all that McGuire and the Robinsons represent—is classic anti-square knowingness.

You can see in this example the problem that a return to square poses: anti-square is so much easier and more fun. Knowledge, even on McGuire's level, is notoriously difficult to acquire. Sixteen years of hard, slogging schoolwork, and what do you know? Not enough to carry on ten minutes of intelligent conversation on any subject in the world with any person who actually knows something about the subject. Knowingness, though—a child can master that. (Can and does: there is an obvious inverse relationship between age and knowingness; the absolute life peak of knowingness generally arrives between the ages of twelve and sixteen for females, fourteen and eighteen for males—whereas, as these cohorts can attest, grown-ups don't know anything.)

This is why Benjamin Braddock had to ignore, with prejudice, Mr. McGuire.

COMMENT

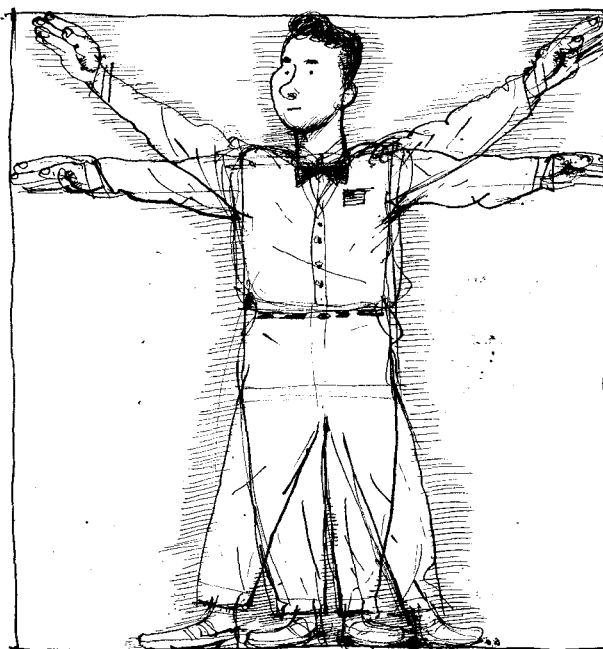
MICHAEL KELLY

McGuire may have been a fool, but he was, in the limited area of business and economic trends, probably a knowledgeable fool. Had Benjamin been obliged to respond to McGuire's advice in terms of knowledge, he would have been utterly lost—he would have been the one exposed as a fool. But for Ben—and more to the point, for the movie's audience—knowingness offered a lovely way to not only counter McGuire's knowledge but also trump it. Ben didn't have to know anything about McGuire to show himself intellectually (and aesthetically, and even morally) superior to McGuire. He only had to know that what McGuire thought he knew was a joke and McGuire was a joke because—because the McGuires of the world are definitionally jokes, and if you don't understand that, I can't explain it to you, because you are a McGuire. That's knowingness, and for no-sweat self-satisfaction you can't beat it.

The hard-easy dynamic that obtains with knowledge and knowingness covers other aspects of square and anti-square. Square: virtuous, chaste, modest, honest, brave, industrious, tough, kind to children and waiters. Anti-square: vice-tolerant, promiscuous, boastful, honest when it suits, don't-get-mad-get-even, sharp, retains a tough attorney, kind to Kennedy children and waitresses who look like supermodels. Square: proper dress required, also proper manners, proper morals, and proper language. Anti-square: Jack Kerouac. Square is not overly concerned with comfort. My father, who is seventy-eight, will sartorially relax to the point of allowing, on occasion, corduroy trousers and a tweed jacket instead of a suit, but he doesn't venture much beyond that. His father's idea of unbending was to appear on his front stoop of a Saturday without coat and tie and stiff detachable

collar, and with the sleeves of his washed, bleached, starched, ironed white shirt rolled up nearly to his elbows. And this, mind, was the relatively relaxed standard of the working classes.

When America was square, even being anti-square was hard. Take, for example, the issue of courage. A man could be manifestly courageous or not, but if he was not courageous, he was well advised to hide that fact. In square America other men and even women made life hard for men who clearly failed the minimal (and, it should be noted, they always were minimal)



requirements of manliness. Likewise with other social conventions. In square America you could choose to be a seducer of women, a drunk, a gambler, a layabout, a sartorial disgrace. But this would not be a respectable life; indeed, it would be, to a degree now hard to imagine, a harried life. The Beats were the first figures to rebel openly against the social conventions of post-World War II America pretty much across the board. Reading what they wrote in the late 1950s and early 1960s, you are struck (apart from the generally third-rate quality of their thoughts and words) by the rigor it took to lead the anti-square life then.

After all that went away, we ended up with a culture in which the anti-square values achieved their natural

status as the default positions of life. Not terribly inclined to painful honesty? Not to worry: learn from *Seinfeld* that honesty is for people who live in Duluth. Inclined to sharp practices in your business dealings? Relax: nobody pays retail anymore, why should you? Not terribly brave? Oh, well, who truly is?

It is some distance from this territory to Mayberry, RFD. But you never could get there from here anyway. The idea of America described in *The Andy Griffith Show* and other programs of the fifties and sixties that have come to stand for the collective cultural sense of square was never intended to be taken as real. These shows were a camp take on a cartoon fantasy of American life and values, and they amounted to a running inside (and fairly cynical) joke on the part of the un-square people who made and marketed television. Their America never did exist, and that America is not what returning to square means.

What did exist, and what perhaps could be returned to, is the modern, hip urban America of the thirties and the forties. This is the America fictionalized and idealized in Hollywood's Humphrey Bogart and Rex Stout's Archie Goodwin and Stephen E. Ambrose's *Band of Brothers*, but it was not at root a fiction. It was real, and it was a time and a place that no one could ever mistake for square. Indeed, this was the America that defined American style so absolutely that every evocation of cool since has been in imitation of it or in reaction to it.

Yet the values of this America were values that came to be associated with square: courage, bravery, strength, honesty, love of country, sense of duty. Then, though, these values were not seen as square. Nor were they seen as square's political analogue, conservative. There was then no necessary disjunction between cool and patriotic, or cool and strong, or cool and conservative, and no understood conjunction between square and patriotic or strong and liberal. (See Bogart in *Casablanca* for the ultimate expression of all of this.) This seems to me a cultural state that might again, finally, be attainable. And I think people might like it, too—especially if we got to wear fedoras again.

A MODEST LITTLE WAR

An exit strategy isn't a foreign policy

.....

Longtime subscribers to this magazine—extremely longtime subscribers—may remember an article in the January 1942 issue titled “Foundations of the Peace,” in which Vice President Henry A. Wallace laid out several ideas for improving nutrition in the postwar world. The article was written when the United States was girding itself for what everyone knew would be a long and grim conflict. And yet here was the Vice President, already detailing post-victory programs!

Nor was this considered odd; the press then was full of post-victory visions. The next issue of *The Atlantic* contained an essay by Thomas Mann titled “How to Win the Peace,” and one by Alfred North Whitehead titled “The Problem of Reconstruction.”

Wallace and the others seemed to salivate at the prospect of building a better world. They understood that the war would create a tremendous opportunity to reshape ravaged areas. And they were confident that the United States and its allies could accomplish great and beneficent tasks. “It is the hour for elation,” a writer for *The Nation* declared just after Pearl Harbor, in an effusion characteristic of the era. “Here is the time when a man can be what an American means, can fight for what America has always meant—an audacious, adventurous seeking for a decent earth.”

As it turned out, this confidence was entirely justified. After the war the United States fostered democracy in Japan—among a people who in 1942 would have been considered as unready for democracy as any in the world. The Allies rebuilt Europe in such a way that after millennia of conflict, war between Western European states is unthinkable today. American elites moved with a bold spirit to confront the Soviet Union, creating what Secretary of State Dean Acheson called the “situations of strength” that laid the groundwork for eventual victory in the Cold War.

This sort of confidence in America’s

ability to fundamentally improve the world is as foreign to us today as a Betty Grable poster. We no longer go into wars enthusiastic about opportunities to spread democracy and freedom afterward. We may go in with resolve, but we also go in obsessively aware of the limits of what we can achieve. We have to

define the mission narrowly, we tell ourselves. We perpetually overestimate our enemies, underestimate our own power, and exaggerate the casualties we expect to incur. The Iraqi

Republican Guard? Ferocious fighters, we were warned before Desert Storm—Americans will be coming home in body bags by the thousands. The Balkans? A hopeless cesspool. Afghanistan? A quagmire—look at what happened to the Soviets. The Taliban would rather die than surrender. Air power? It never works. America now enters every conflict with the might of a muscleman and the mentality of a wimp.

The modesty of our aims in entering wars is surpassed only by the timidity with which we conclude them. Can anyone imagine that Harry Truman would have crushed Saddam Hussein’s army but then decided to leave the Iraqi dictator in power? Or that Douglas MacArthur or Dwight Eisenhower would have exulted, as General Tommy Franks did in early November, “[We’ve got] the easiest exit strategy we’ve had in years”?

The excuses we give for our fearfulness are many and varied: Our allies will abandon us. The Arab streets will explode. Those people in (name your country) aren’t ready for democracy anyway. But the result remains the same: we achieve just as much victory as is needed to allow us to return home.

The failure of nerve starts at the top. When confronted with a range of opinions, our foreign-policy elites tend to cling to the darkest and most misanthropic one, often against all available evidence. For example, polling data and historical precedent suggest that the American people will tolerate casualties in pursuit of sensible political ends (they

did so even through the campaign in Somalia). But it is an absolute article of faith in foreign-policy circles that the American people will not endure casualties and do not have the patience and fortitude to support any sustained foreign initiative—so it would be unwise to launch one. Similarly, when tyrannical governments have fallen during the past two decades, their defeats have usually brought good news: more than two dozen democracies have come into being as a result. But the foreign-policy establishment still operates on the assumption that whenever a dictator is toppled, the ensuing instability will be even worse than his totalitarianism. As U.S. forces were crushing the Taliban, surely the worst regime on earth, I was struck by how many foreign-policy experts and colleagues of mine in the Washington media I heard telling one another how naive it was to think that the Northern Alliance would be any better.

What happened to America’s confidence? The first answer, of course, is Vietnam. Second, American policy is now conducted largely by a meritocratic elite, which was not bred, as the best members of the old WASP elite were, to seize the responsibilities of leadership. Third, our triumph in the Cold War has had a perversely gloomy effect. That was a great moral and ideological victory, the argument goes, but now we live in a messier and grimmer world, one better suited to the sort of coldhearted caution espoused by so-called realists than to the warmhearted idealism of those who would champion democracy. We should try to stay out of as many messy situations as possible, the new conventional wisdom goes. If we allow ourselves to be driven by “moral enthusiasms,” we’ll only end up sapping our own strength.

Our foreign-policy elites derive considerable pleasure from their gimlet-eyed pose. It feels good to be a snob—to see the harsh realities that common people don’t see, to rise above the idealistic sentiments of those tender souls and to deal instead in the realm of power politics and economic interest, where inside players (such as these experts themselves) seem to wield such

COMMENT

**DAVID
BROOKS**

influence. Members of the foreign-policy establishment have long suffered from what has been called “pronoia”—more or less the opposite of paranoia. They believe that a small conspiracy secretly runs the world—but they think this is a good thing, because they are in on it.

Regardless of the causes, today’s pessimistic posture leads to the sort of vulgarized realism that George W. Bush adopted when he ran for President. Bush made it eminently clear that he would not sally forth into the ugly kingdom of Abroad. He wasn’t into nation building, he declared. He resisted “international social work” (as one critic deridingly called our efforts to end

tled onto *Air Force One*, where he seems to have had an on-the-plane-to-Nebraska conversion experience. Since then he has talked about foreign policy in explicitly moral terms. Far from exercising restraint, he has set his goals as high as possible: this is our “historical opportunity to rid the world of terrorism,” he told *Newsweek* recently. He has talked about America’s moral mission in the world, using the exact phrases that cause foreign-policy realists to choke on their Courvoisier.

I don’t know whether his Christian faith or his genetic links to the old Protestant establishment are responsible, but Bush now speaks in the epic

terms that our leaders used during and after World War II. These terms call forth the same lofty visions that Americans have embraced during the best moments in our history. After all, our country rests on the idea that people are born with certain inalienable rights—all people, not just the ones who happen to live within U.S. borders. The Founders firmly believed that the American experiment was to be conducted in behalf of the whole human race.

Reading the letters of Civil War soldiers, as the historian James M. McPherson did for his book *For Cause and Comrades* (1997), one finds that even privates realized that if they failed to defend the Constitution, authoritarians around the world would rejoice. Americans instinctively understood, with Abraham Lincoln, that America was the “last best hope of earth.” They also grasped Teddy Roosevelt’s perception that as an inherently missionary nation, America would lose its vigor at home if it ceased to champion democracy abroad. “If we are to be a really great people,” Roosevelt said, “we must strive in good faith to play a great part in the world.”

This moral impulse has always colored our foreign policy, has always driven us to act more aggressively than we would if we interpreted our national interest purely in economic and political terms. Yet rarely has it had as few champions as it has now, the President’s conversion notwithstanding. Hardly anyone in Congress—exceptions include Senators John McCain, Joseph Lieberman, Chuck Hagel, John Kerry, and Jon Kyl—talks comfortably about foreign affairs as a contest of values and ideals. Among foreign-policy experts a smaller group still, led by Robert Kagan, of the Carnegie Endowment, asserts that America’s primary mission is to preserve its global supremacy so that it can continue to exercise its benevolent influence around the world.

America is engaged in a debate about how far to proceed in the war on terrorism—whether to press on to Baghdad, whether to root out terrorist organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. It is the salient debate of the war, and it is filled with contradictory evidence. But it’s not really a debate about conditions in the Middle East. It’s a debate about what kind of country America should be.

If the recent past is any guide, we will resist our global responsibilities for as long as possible, until events finally force us into a missionary role. Some further monstrous act will make it clear that this isn’t just a war to kill Osama bin Laden and crush al Qaeda; it’s an ideological fight between democratic pluralism and a new form of fascism. We’ll come to see that only the United States has the power to defeat the fascists so thoroughly that they will be discredited among their former followers. Once we have established the necessary conditions, some brave reformer—counterpart to Lech Walesa and Vojislav Kostunica—will rise up in the Muslim world. The local citizens, who we assumed were anti-American and content with their rulers, will turn out to be pro-American and liberty-loving. Some rough system of democracy will come into being, commensurate with the regional culture. This scenario has played out so often, and in so many venues, that only the realists consider it unrealistic.



genocide in the Balkans). Instead he stood for realistic restraint, with the emphasis on restraint. When talking about foreign-policy issues Bush used value-free language designed to stifle any thought of our country’s ideals or moral responsibilities. He repeated the phrase “vital national interests” a lot.

And yet America plays at being a realistic nation the same way teenagers play at smoking. We adopt the pose we think makes us look grown up and cynical, but we never quite pull it off. When a crisis comes, we revert to our true nature as an idealistic, morally driven, optimistic nation.

Within minutes of the attacks on September 11 President Bush was hus-

DO AS WE SAY, NOT AS WE DO

*Globalization might actually be good for poor countries,
if only rich countries played by the rules*

.....

America's leaders have to think beyond guns if the war on terror is to succeed in freeing us from the fear of terrorism. That Osama bin Laden was born into his millions and that the mass murderers of September 11 appear to have come from comfortable circumstances should not blind us to the danger posed by Third World poverty.

Writing in these pages some years ago, Robert D. Kaplan said that we in the West were like the occupants of a limousine being driven through a slum, with the desperate masses, their patience thinned by global communications, peering through the windows. In order to strip the aura of Armageddon from what Paul Kennedy and Matthew Connelly, also in these pages, described as a contest of "the West against the Rest," the Rest must share in the prosperity of the West. As long as the only way to help them was by sending tax dollars abroad in the form of development aid, the Rest had little hope. Taxpayers would never support the amount necessary to make a difference. They barely support the current level of U.S. aid, which amounts to one tenth of one percent of GNP. Now there is another way: trade plus aid. But globalization is no painless elixir. Unlike the cost of development aid, which is borne by all taxpayers, the costs of trade will be paid by a relative few Americans. Textile workers, sugar-production workers, and others employed in labor-intensive industries will lose their jobs so that the Rest can narrow the life-chances gap with the West.

That, at any rate, is the unacknowledged message of two new studies of the effects of globalization on poor countries. "Eight Broken Promises: Why the WTO Isn't Working for the World's Poor," produced by the British development charity Oxfam, and "Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries 2002," produced by the World Bank, detail the "blatant hypocrisy and double standards that govern the behaviour of rich countries toward poor coun-

tries" (to quote from the Oxfam study). Basically, the West has required the Rest to open their markets without reciprocating commensurately. Developing countries lose about \$100 billion a year owing to Western export subsidies and trade barriers. For agriculture alone these amounted to \$245 billion in 2000—

COMMENT **JACK BEATTY**

about five times what the West spent on development assistance that year. Tariff barriers against manufactured goods from the developing world are, on average, four times as high as those against products from the industrialized world. What the World Bank calls "deeply poor" nations, where people live on less than a dollar a day, face tariffs more than twice as high as do "non-poor" nations, where people live on more than two dollars a day. Leather, footwear, textiles, and other products coming into the United States from the forty-nine least-developed countries—where some 300 million people live below a UN-defined poverty line—face tariffs so high that they cost those countries more than the countries get from the United States in aid. Trade is far more important than aid for such countries. Every 0.7 percent increase in their exports generates as much income as they now receive in aid. "International trade has the potential to act as a powerful source of economic growth and poverty reduction," the Oxfam report states. "Yet that potential is being lost." Overall, in recent years there has been a 10 percent drop in demand for imports from the developing world.

In the Uruguay Round of tariff reductions, concluded in 1994, the West pledged to reduce agricultural subsidies by 36 percent; in return, the developing countries would lower their tariffs on agricultural imports. The developing countries met their part of the bargain by halving their average tariffs. The developed countries reneged: subsidies have in recent years made up almost 40 percent of the value of Western farm output—about the same as when Uruguay

started. Of the \$90 billion spent on crop supports over the past five years, some \$60 billion went to the top 10 percent of recipients—Fortune 500 companies, city-dwelling farm owners, and big agribusiness. The average subsidy to the bottom 80 percent, meanwhile, was \$5,830. These subsidies price the developing countries' foodstuffs not only out of possible export markets but also out of their home markets. On the import side, Western governments levy tariffs on developing countries' agricultural products that are five times as high as those on all other goods. In the European Union, for example, meat and dairy imports face a tariff of more than 100 percent.

If farm exports are about the only escape from rural poverty in the Third World, textile and other labor-intensive exports are the only escape from urban poverty. Yet here, too, the West has failed to live up to its promises. At Uruguay the industrialized countries agreed to phase out the protectionist Multi-Fibre Agreement by 2005, yet 80 percent of textile and clothing exports from the developing countries will still face restrictions in 2004. The average tariff on these goods is 11 percent—three times as high as the average industrial tariff. South Asia loses approximately \$2 billion a year to these tariffs. The United States promised General Pervez Musharaff, the President of Pakistan, that it would accept more textile imports as one of the conditions for Pakistan's support in the war on terror, but Senator Ernest Hollings, of South Carolina, was not consulted, and the textile lobby must have whole congressional delegations in its pocket.

If the United States lives up to the promises it made to the developing world, U.S. textile workers will eventually have to find new jobs. Their sacrifice may be a matter of national security, to preserve the safety of the rest of us in Robert Kaplan's limo. Although Dick Armey, the House majority leader, says that helping workers displaced by terrorism is not "commensurate with the American spirit," the nation should prove him wrong in the treatment it accords to workers displaced by the economic war on terrorism—that is, by the urgent necessity to import more goods from the Third World.

THE HEARTLAND OF DARKNESS

Anthrax and hermits and gun shows, oh my!

.....

Some Americans have an abiding need, it seems, for a cultural and political heart of darkness that can easily be circled on a map. Since the days of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken, who defined sophistication for would-be cosmopolitan readers negatively, by drawing a satirical perimeter around the Midwest, the coastal smart set has relied on the idea of a landlocked dumb set to emphasize its own alleged refinement. Mencken's booboisie and Lewis's Babbitts lived out there somewhere, in the weedy prairies far beyond the city gates. These homegrown barbarians fit a profile that is recognizable to this day: pious, suspicious, eminently dupable, and given to joining lodges, clubs, and klaverns. For progressive urbanites, nothing raised morale like the notion of being surrounded by ill-bred dolts. Thus it was that Manhattan invented Main Street.

In the 1960s Main Street was moved to the Deep South, but when segregation disappeared, a hole opened up in the political atlas. Once the rednecks were reforming themselves and the suburban heartland had been made safe for Montessoris, the mainstream looked for a new backwater. By the 1990s—just in time to serve the purposes of the Clinton presidency—such a place had been discovered: the Mountain West.

Montana and Idaho—suddenly targeted as putative dens of countless armed zealots and neo-Nazis—had the advantage of being so thinly populated (and so far away from the major media centers) that whatever was said about them was easy to credit, if one was so inclined. From stories about the Unabomber, Randy Weaver, and Montana's tax-resisting Freemen a new template was fashioned by the eastern press. The parts that didn't quite fit were made to fit. Theodore Kaczynski, the leftist product of Harvard and Berkeley's tofu intelligentsia, was cast as an heir to Jeremiah Johnson. The hapless Weaver, a footloose Iowan whose wife and son had been slain during a standoff with government

agents for a reason that few can now recall, served as a new archetype: the loony cabin dweller, reading racist pamphlets by lantern light while cocking an ear for the whir of UN helicopters. And in what to a westerner like me was the oddest exaggeration of all, a ragtag band of bumper-sticker patriots that called itself the Militia of Montana was trumped up into a shadowy rebel army. Perceived as always about to strike but never quite doing so, the Militia became an all-purpose bogeyman for everyone from gun-control crusaders to Janet Reno's shoot first, ask questions later Justice Department.

The new geography of fear persists. The anthrax panic was only a few days old when some in the national press advanced the theory that the culprit was an anti-government hermit holed up in a shack among the pines. The speculative stories about this shared a somewhat wishful tone; linking a novel terror to old villains made the threat familiar, comprehensible. When a *New York Times* reporter visited a Utah gun show and found a man selling handbooks on home-made bio-weapons (information that is available on the Internet), this was major news. Why? Because it fit a story line dear and comforting to urbanite hearts. When a *Times* reader sees the words "gun show" in a story, he knows he's in for another dispatch from the vast moral wasteland that is America beyond the Hudson, and he settles right in.

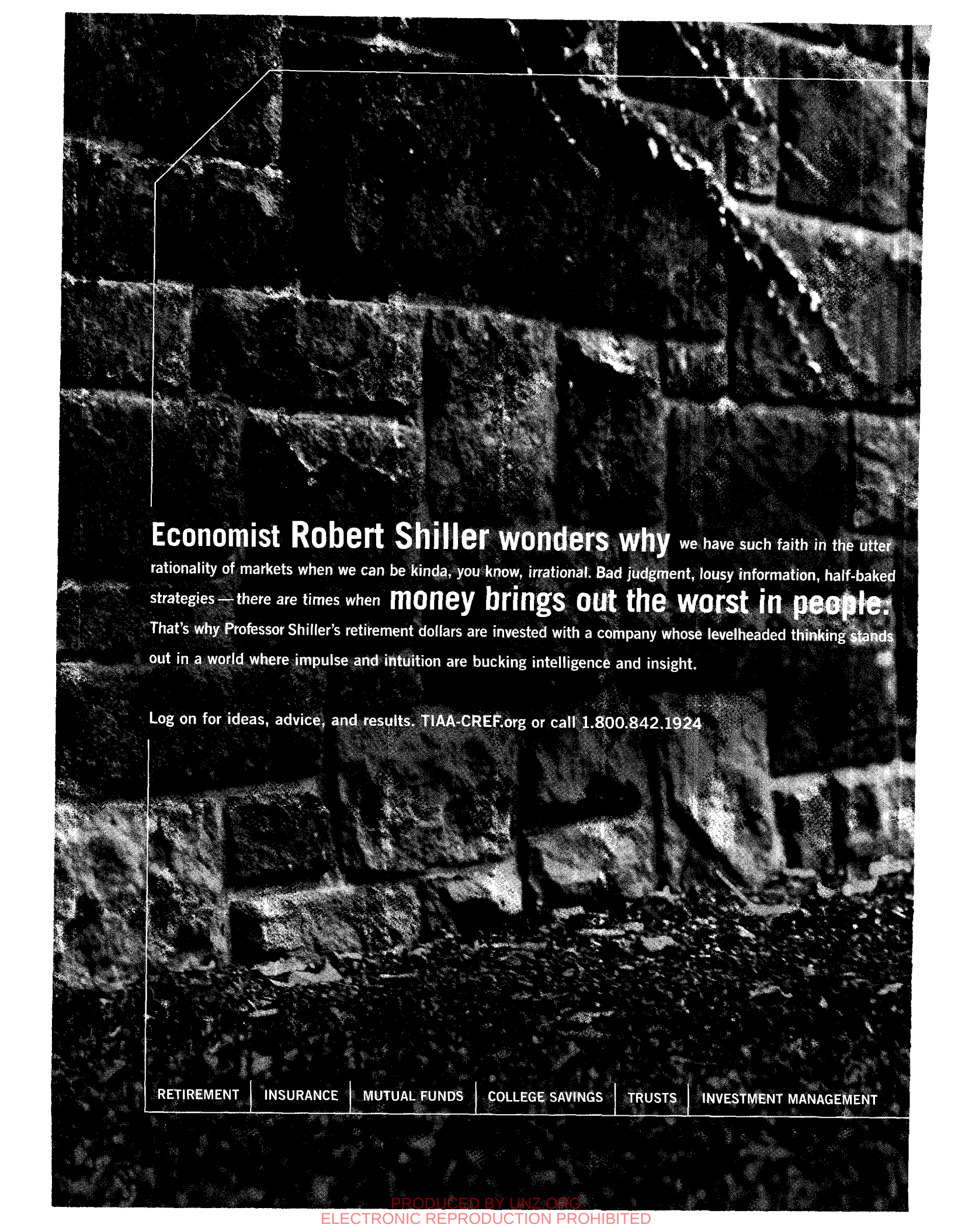
Never mind the interior's progressive history as a stronghold of organized labor, women's rights, and environmentalism—the notion that flyover country is harsh and backward lives on because folks who aren't from there want it to. In this model not just a few but all Idaho cabin dwellers—perhaps because they're

relatively poor—are reflexively suspected of being racial "separatists," whereas those who dwell in Caucasian coastal enclaves such as, say, Newport, Rhode Island, and Kennebunkport, Maine, suffer no such taint. There may be a certain romance to the thought. The deskbound have always loved their cowboys, whether those cowboys' hats are white or black. We cherish the notion that somewhere in Wyoming, beyond the reach of telephones and faxes, uncompromised individualism still thrives. Now that the real West has its own glass office towers, drive-time radio shows, and Olive Gardens, the desire to believe in nonconformist savages, noble or not, may be even stronger. The impulse has, however, taken a curious turn: the new Lone Rangers are seen not as exotic heroes but as epic enemies of the state.

Because, as ever, the state needs enemies—and the farther from Wall Street, Harvard Square, and Pennsylvania Avenue, the better. Like the welfare queens of the Reagan 1980s, Montana's legendary right-wing hermits have a political significance out of proportion to their actual numbers. It's not the prospect of violence they represent that breeds anxiety in the larger culture, it's



the challenge their taste for isolation poses to America's newfound communitarian ethic. Living off the grid, home schooling, and ignoring the popular media might once have exemplified rugged individualism or a principled rejection of modern capitalism, but today such choices can seem hostile, sociopathic. Networked, interdependent, and tolerant, the new global village would seem to welcome everyone, but apparently it's no place for loners.



Economist Robert Shiller wonders why we have such faith in the utter rationality of markets when we can be kinda, you know, irrational. Bad judgment, lousy information, half-baked strategies — there are times when **money brings out the worst in people.**

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THE PROFESSORS PROFESS

Ordinary people can say stupid things. Brilliant people do it brilliantly

.....

Eric Foner is a distinguished American historian. Writing in the *London Review of Books* three weeks after the terrorist attacks on the United States, however, he had this to say: "I'm not sure which is more frightening: the horror that engulfed New York City or the apocalyptic rhetoric emanating daily from the White House." Come again? Can this really be a difficult choice? One is reminded of Martin Heidegger's saying that although the extermination of the Jews was bad, so is mechanized agriculture.

It is hard to imagine an ordinary person making such an obtuse, inconsequent, and insensitive statement as did this brilliant professor—or as did another American historian, Thomas Laqueur, who wrote in the same issue of the *London Review of Books*, "On the scale of evil the New York bombings are sadly not so extraordinary and our Government has been responsible for many that are probably worse." As a matter of logic absolutely nothing follows from these statements. They are pure blather. But it would be unfair to base an indictment of the entire professoriat on the comments of a handful of professors. Foner and Laqueur are not representative—except in their willingness to make fools of themselves in public by writing precipitately about matters outside their area of professional specialization.

That willingness has become widespread among academics. We saw it in the two preceding national crises of recent years, the Clinton impeachment and the 2000 presidential-election deadlock. Historians and law professors weighed in with op-ed pieces, full-page advertisements, legislative testimony, talk-show appearances, and magazine articles. Much of what they had to say seems in hindsight overblown, even silly. About the impeachment they said that Clinton was merely being gentlemanly in lying under oath about his affair with Monica Lewinsky; that an impeachment trial by the Senate would (regardless of its outcome) endanger our political institu-

tions; that a trial would frighten the stock market; that a vote to acquit Clinton would be a vote for environmentalism and abortion rights; and (from the other side of the ideological aisle) that failure to convict Clinton would show that the nation was in a free fall to decadence. Concerning the election deadlock, professors en masse, long before they could

have mastered the intricacies of election law and the election statistics, said that Bush had stolen the election; that the U.S. Supreme Court Justices were corrupt; that the

decision in *Bush v. Gore* was the worst decision in the history of the Court (worse than, for example, the decision in the Dred Scott case, which is sometimes blamed for the Civil War). Several of our most distinguished constitutional theorists argued in *The New York Times* that "there is good reason to believe that Vice President Gore has been elected President by a clear constitutional majority of the popular vote and the electoral college," even though it is elementary that a popular-vote majority has absolutely no constitutional significance for the election of the President.

Both the impeachment and the election deadlock were rich in legal and historical issues, so it was natural that law professors and historians would speak to them, though it was regrettable—and, indeed, an embarrassment to academia—that so much of their talk was ill informed, premature, and inaccurate. One might have expected more caution about September 11, because although some of the responsive measures taken by the government raise issues of civil liberties, the principal issues presented by the terrorist attacks have to do with policing, intelligence, military strategy and tactics, and foreign affairs—matters about which few of the academics who spoke out about the impeachment and the election are informed. But that has not silenced them. In *The New York Times* of November 6 Bruce Ackerman, a constitutional-law professor at Yale who was hyperactive

in opposition to Clinton's impeachment and in support of Gore's challenge to Bush's lead in Florida, offered his take on the aftermath of September 11. He wrote that our domestic-security problems are solvable: "It would be a mistake to exaggerate the long-term threat on the home front," because the Islamic terrorists do not have "significant support in our society." This is a remarkable statement, given that without such support those terrorists were able to kill thousands of Americans in a matter of minutes. Ackerman's strong optimism about the home front is matched by an equally strong pessimism about "the international prospect." In his view, nothing we can do abroad will significantly lessen the ranks of the terrorists. Hence "we should figure out clever ways to declare victory at the first decent opportunity and remove our troops." Declare victory before victory is won? Who would be fooled by that? Are terrorist networks to be left alone to gather their strength for renewed attacks, perhaps with gas, germs, or fissile material? Can we fortify the United States against such attacks? Don't we have to try to spoil them, and doesn't that mean we have to operate abroad?

I don't want to make Ackerman's mistake and offer my own recipe for fighting international terrorism. I am no more an expert in national-security matters than he is. What I want to emphasize is how poorly *argued* Ackerman's position is—how badly it fails to answer the obvious questions. But this is no surprise, because he is writing far outside his field.

Academics are smart and fast, and, in nonscientific fields such as law and history, they can be glib. They are able to supply plausible commentary at short notice on pretty much any subject that engages the interest of the public. The greater that interest, the greater the outpouring of instant commentary. But when academics speak off the cuff, especially about matters outside their areas of expertise, quality tends to go to hell. And there is no accountability for their pratfalls. A tenured professor who makes a fool of himself in the media can always retreat to the security of the academy.

COMMENT
**RICHARD A.
POSNER**

COUNCILS OF WAR

Military spinoffs have transformed civilian life. The momentum right now may be running in the other direction

.....

There is no mistaking the excitement in Washington when world news originates here. Through the second Clinton Administration it was easy to think that a drive down Highway 101 in the San Francisco Bay area brought one closer to the real centers of power—Oracle, Intel, Cisco—than a drive along Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol. In Silicon Valley and Seattle the technology industry's leaders talked about the "withering away of the state," and in Washington the arrival of technology-driven prosperity was the central fact of political life.

However distant that seems now, the corrective reaction is, perhaps inevitably, going too far. I may be biased from having spent several years in Seattle and San Francisco before returning last summer to Washington. But now that the state is back, I am struck by the assumption here that if there is truly significant technology at the moment, it is the kind the military has used in Afghanistan. During the weeks when Taliban forces were collapsing, I did see three applications of technology with important economic, political, and even terrorism-related implications. Each was plain old civilian technology.

In one case the technology is e-mail, which has made possible the "open-source intelligence" movement. For decades diplomats and soldiers have bitterly joked that most important international secrets are likely to show up in the newspaper before they make their way through classified channels. Obviously, governments can still keep secrets. An illustration: three months after the terrorist attacks the Federal Aviation Administration was still enforcing strict "no-fly zones"—ones forbidden to private noncommercial aircraft—over three cities. Two were the terrorists' targets: Washington, the political capital, and New York, the financial capital. The third was ... Boston. Not San Francisco, capital

of the technology industry; not Los Angeles, capital of America's image-making industry; not Chicago, capital of exposed skyscrapers. I asked Steven Brown, the FAA official in charge of airspace, why Boston? Because the planes that hit New York took off there? He said, essentially, If you knew what we know, you'd understand.

WASHINGTON
DESK

**JAMES
FALLOWS**

What he actually said was "The vulnerabilities in Boston, those known to the public and others, are unique." Until we do know what he knows, there's no choice but to take it on faith. Maybe this is where Dick Cheney has been.

But the strictures secrecy requires can make it hard for armies or security units to get full, timely information in emergencies. One solution is to circulate non-secret information. In the mid-1980s the retired Air Force colonel John Boyd attracted adherents, especially in the Marine Corps, with his view that "fast feedback" loops were the key to military success. That is, the army that could observe and react to its opponents' movements the fastest would be the most likely to prevail. A young Marine captain named G. I. Wilson drew from Boyd's work the idea that the military should look for information as widely as possible. "It takes both unclassified open source resources and classified intelligence to win in today's information age," Wilson wrote in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in 1995, with Major Frank Bunkers.

In practice "open-source resources" means what the best foreign correspondents and embassy political officers have always tried to keep abreast of, but on a bigger scale: reports in local papers, sudden changes in what's available in stores, snippets from the radio. Over the past decade Wilson and his colleagues have set up several electronic networks. The largest, called Access Intelligence (AI), connects hundreds of people in the defense, intelligence, law-enforcement, commercial, and academic worlds. It works like a normal

list server or electronic mailing list: one person posts a message and everyone else receives it as e-mail moments later. The AI network often produces a hundred or more messages a day; recipients quickly scan the titles for subjects they are interested in. Although many AI members have security clearance, the material posted is strictly "open source"—publicly available news reports or personal observations. That way the question of violating security rules won't come up.

AI has proved a valuable supplement to the slower, more controlled channels of official communication—much as cell phones did for many civilians on September 11. For instance, Rick Forno, a computer expert who helps to operate the AI list, was in a building overlooking the Pentagon; he posted real-time reports about areas of damage and unfolding events before some of them appeared on CNN. Wilson, who is now a colonel based at Camp Pendleton, has relayed messages to ships' crews during (pre-Afghanistan) combat operations. "I can tell them what's being reported here, and they compare it to what they are seeing," he told me recently.

Open-source intelligence "frequently appears less valuable than classified information because it does not carry the classification mystique," Wilson wrote in 1995. "Because it appears less valuable, it is shared more freely and used more. The irony is by sharing it more the information's value and usefulness increases." Within the Pentagon, Wilson told me, reports that were posted on AI have been stamped with classified markings and used in briefings. An old trick of John Boyd's, Wilson said, was to get data into circulation by leaving it in "the head."

Still, the AI network doesn't get respect. "It's not popular with the intelligence community, because it doesn't cost anything," Wilson told me. (Forno and Bill Feinbloom, a former Green Beret, run it as volunteers, and it is free to all users.) "But you've got about three hundred people acting as individual sensors, from a whole variety of backgrounds. I may say something that seems commonsensical to a Marine, but someone who's

a physicist will come back and say no, it can't have worked that way."

If the AI network is the application of e-mail to the military-intelligence business, a new company called Development Space represents the application of eBay to international aid. In the quarter century plus of the personal-computer age a few seminal applications have suddenly made computers necessities for new groups of people. The first was VisiCalc, the original spreadsheet program, whose introduction in 1979 gave small businesses a reason to own computers. The next was the coming of e-mail. And the most recent is eBay, the online auction site. Whereas Amazon.com, for instance, offers a faster, more convenient version of a familiar shopping experience, eBay creates something that didn't exist before: a self-policing worldwide market matching buyers and sellers of even the most obscure goods. I am generally skeptical of "perfect markets" as laid out in economics textbooks, but an eBay auction for a used car, a signed baseball glove, or a new digital camera comes close. Those who want to sell have the largest audience of buyers; those who want to buy have the largest selection to choose from; and each party can judge whether to trust the other by means of a rating system based on past transactions (and a cautionary label on those with no record yet).

Dennis Whittle and Mari Kuraishi, two employees of the World Bank who had served around the globe, decided in 1998 to try to match resources and need just as directly in the public sector. Their first approach was bricks-and-mortar: a one-day Innovation Marketplace inside the atrium of the Bank's headquarters, in Washington. Normally proposals for Bank projects wend their way through a tedious multi-stage vetting process. On this one day anyone who worked for the Bank could set up a little booth, science-fair style, and make a pitch for a project; at the end of the day a jury would award grants to the best ones. More than a hundred teams made presentations, and eleven got awards, totaling \$3 million.

Whittle and Kuraishi next persuaded the Bank to hold a two-day fair, with ap-

plications accepted from anyone who wanted to come and present an idea. More than 1,100 groups, from eighty countries, sent proposals. The heart of the program was letting people who knew firsthand about a local need or dream—a well, a road, a small business—explain what the money could do. A group of war widows in Bosnia, for example, offered a plan for a small, high-end knitting operation. The World Bank brought more than 300 finalists to Washington; and the forty-four winners got grants averaging just over \$100,000 and totaling about \$5 million. (The war widows won, and now they are prosperous, selling their output mainly to fashion houses in Europe and the United States.)

Electronic publicity explains the tenfold increase in applications. "Once this idea gets into e-mail circulation, it is amazing how fast it gets around the world," Whittle told me. "People who didn't have Internet access were contacted by those who did and encouraged to try. One Turkish guy was strutting around like a proud father at a Phi Beta Kappa ceremony—five of the finalists had found out about the program from him."

Whittle and Kuraishi thought that if the concept worked despite the real-world impediments of getting applicants to one place at one time, it would work all the better if it were also implemented electronically. In 2000 they resigned from the Bank, and just as the Internet economy was beginning to falter, they created an online company, Development Space, which began operation last month. Like eBay, it is meant to let the "market"—in this case for development aid—clear at minimum cost and with little or no bureaucratic interference. People who want money—for vaccines, for an orphanage, for a small factory—can prepare online descriptions of their projects, with help from advisers, if necessary, in drawing up business plans. Foundations and government aid agencies that intend to give money—but also individuals who will give, say, \$250 if they think it will help—survey the projects and decide which to support. Various inspection and feedback systems will establish a track record, as on eBay, and follow up to see how the money was used.

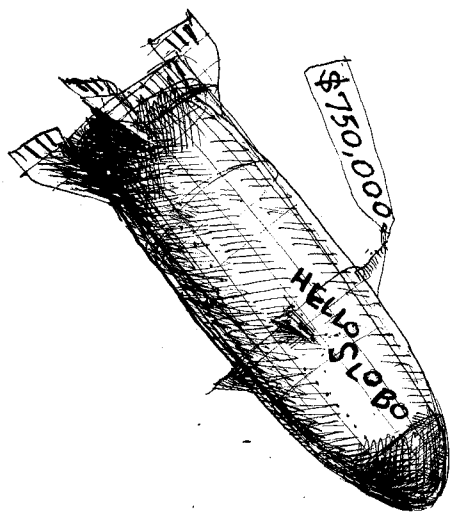
A number of environmental foundations have approached Development Space to explore using this platform to find projects to support. If America's past wars are any guide, huge amounts of recovery assistance will soon be headed to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and who knows where else. This model could be a lower-cost, better-targeted way of getting it there.

Open-source intelligence and an eBay for foreign aid are extensions of the Internet's model of information flow. The third innovation comes from a company called Athena Technologies, and it's an extension of the ongoing hardware revolution.

In 1992 a young South African named David Vos was preparing for his Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering at MIT. His dissertation project was to build a guidance system that would let a unicycle propel itself, with no rider. I have seen a videotape of his presentation. On an arctic day in Boston a shaggy, tired-looking graduate student in a ski jacket (Vos) hovers inches away from a unicycle, ready like a parent to reach out and support it. But the unicycle keeps itself erect and propels itself around a basketball court, responding to commands from something on top that looks like a cake box.

The mechanism inside the box was Vos's achievement: a system of inertial sensors and quick-response motors that could detect changes in the unicycle's balance eighteen times a second and issue the right corrective command. A tricycle is of course inherently stable, and a bicycle has a kind of stability when moving. But because a unicycle is always trying to fall over, most people cannot react quickly enough to control it, and no mechanical device had previously been able to.

Ten years later Athena, Vos's company, has produced a device that drives not unicycles—or people, like the inventor Dean Kamen's highly publicized "IT" vehicle—but airplanes, and with significant implications for defense. The device is known as GuideStar, and it is about the size of a car radio. Packed with inertial sensors and logic circuits, it is capable of detecting and



reacting to changes fifty times a second and of flying aircraft that are too tricky or unstable for human pilots to control. Vos made another video to underscore the point. In it an odd-looking airplane—one big wing and no tail—sits on a runway. Without a tail an aircraft would be even more unstable than a unicycle and, according to simulation models, would require such constant and immediate adjustments that even a skilled pilot would quickly lose control of it. But in the video this jet-powered tailless plane zooms off the runway and then circles several times before it lands, to the joyous whoops of Vos's team in the background.

GuideStar has civilian potential—for instance, as part of the autopilot in small planes or airliners, permitting them to land in circumstances that overwhelm the pilot. Another device shown in Vos's videos suggests military and civilian uses alike. This is a vehicle, built by the Micro Craft company and guided by Vos's systems, that looks like a large smudgepot, with a cylindrical base and a vertical shaft, powered by a compact engine. It can take off straight up, maneuver itself around corners, travel at altitudes from treetop level to a few hundred feet, and land straight down. In the civilian world this could be a jazzy counterpart to Kamen's "IT" vehicle, delivering parcels rather than people. For the military it could also be a remote sensing device, far cheaper than current pilotless drone aircraft.

But what Athena has been touting since September 11 is that its GuideStar

controls could be programmed to prevent any airplane from ever going someplace it should not. No airliner, we can assume, will ever be flown into a skyscraper again: the passengers will not let it happen. But in theory it could still happen with a FedEx or a UPS cargo plane. The coordinates of restricted areas and important buildings could be entered into the new guidance system, which could thwart a pilot's attempts to divert the plane. In principle the system could land the airplane at a military airfield if it sensed abnormal commands.

What do these innovations have in common, apart from reminding us of the fecundity of the high-tech world despite the Nasdaq's slide? They show two crucial traits of the civilian tech world in general, and these traits distinguish them from most military technology.

First, they are cheap. The open-source network is literally free to its users. Development Space plans to support the eBay model of foreign aid by taking a seven percent cut of all transactions, to pay for expert teams and authenticators—much less than the overhead of most charities. The Athena controls are both cheaper and more powerful than current autopilots. "We come from the computer-industry mindset that the price has to keep going down," says Jeffrey Leonard, who is on Athena's board of directors.

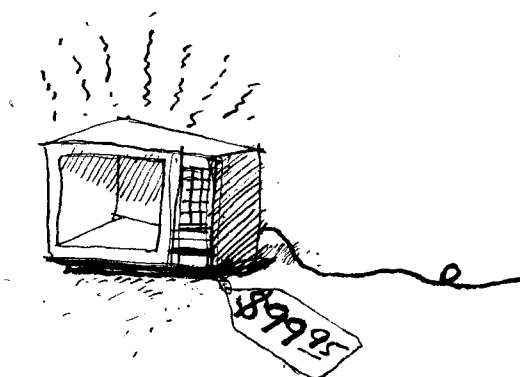
It is easy to forget how important the race to cheapness was in creating the technology boom. Indeed, the Internet's main business problem is that users think content should be free. The contrast with military technology is sharp.

A B-52 bomber, for example, costs about \$23,000 per flight hour just to operate; the B-2, which makes long treks to Afghanistan from its home base in Missouri, costs at least twice as much. During the Kosovo bombing campaign the United States reduced Serb defenses by firing HARM missiles, which lock onto the beam from a radar station and then destroy the station. The Serb army reportedly discovered that it could place microwave ovens in open fields and the HARMs would think the ovens were radar stations. Each oven cost less

than \$100; each missile it attracted cost \$750,000. We pay any price for freedom, and the costs mount up. The idea of a race for cheapness has not spread from the civilian to the military world.

Second, these innovations don't try to replace what is best about human judgment and intelligence. The most popular breakthroughs in the commercial-tech market have let people do more of what they have always wanted to do: buy, sell, interact, explore. Open-source intelligence and Development Space follow this model as well. GuideStar does replace a human function, but a calculator-like one, at which machines should ultimately exceed human abilities—as spreadsheets do, and language-translation programs do not. In principle the military would always prefer to use machines instead of men. Machines don't have grieving families; they don't need to be recruited and trained. Some of the most expensive boondoggles in military technology have involved attempts to mechanize the most sophisticated human abilities—which include, surprisingly, the ability to detect patterns. Any human being can tell a camel from a car. Designing sensors that can reliably do so is very hard. That is why even in the phenomenal rout of the Taliban army, the bombing became effective only after special-operations troops, on foot and on horses, were there to identify the right targets.

This war began with a devastatingly brilliant bit of jujitsu, in which the very openness of our society and elegance of our technology were turned against us. The stages ahead will certainly call not for brute-force technical power alone but for a shrewd combination of human and technological abilities—a lesson the military can take from the civilian world.



AFTER THE QUAGMIRE

Coping with closure; enduring the New Seriousness

.....

Lo! the intrepid Afghan Taliban fighter of warrior lineage ancient. He who has vanquished countless foes, unassailable in his mountain redoubts, imbued with fanatical resolve, possessed by suicidal courage—and currently running around Mazar-i-Sharif getting his beard shaved and playing Uzbeki pop music on his boom box, and using Mrs. Afghan Warrior's burka for a bedspread in the guest room, soon to be rented to foreign aid workers.

The fighting in Afghanistan was so brief that CNN's *Headline News* had to delete three bars from its "Target: Terror" theme to keep the music from outlasting the hostilities. The Soviet Union fought the Afghans for ten years and gave up in ignominious defeat in 1989. What were the Soviets using for weapons—cafeteria buns and rolled-up locker room towels? The United States dropped a lot of cafeteria buns—or something very like them—on Taliban-controlled areas. Exposure to American school-lunch food may have been the deciding factor in the radical Muslims' demoralization. A country that can make something that dreadful from mere flour, yeast, and water is a country not to be defied.

However it was that we achieved victory, achieve it we did, although to what end remains to be seen. One effect of victory has been to make America's elite sanguine about armed conflict for the first time since 1945. "SURPRISE: WAR WORKS AFTER ALL," read the headline on the Week in Review section of *The New York Times* for Sunday, November 18. That same day *The Boston Globe Magazine* ran a cover story titled "The New Patriots": "College students support a country at war—and so do their Vietnam-era parents." Of course, there's always the possibility that the revived fighting spirit among America's elite has nothing to do with Afghanistan but is, rather, a collateral result of Harvard's first undefeated football season since 1913. I believe that Harvard played Mount Holyoke, Smith, Li'l Dickens Day

Care Center, and several Pop Warner teams, but I haven't checked that. At any rate, the word "quagmire" suddenly disappeared from the lexicon of pundits, savants, and mavens and has been replaced by ...

It's uncertain what the successor term for "quagmire" will be. In view of previous Western involvements with Afghanistan, "up the garden path" is a suggestion. "Please, no nation building!" says my friend Mike Schellhammer, an Army major. Mike

was deployed on such missions in Haiti and Bosnia. "We're the Army—we break things on the battlefield," Mike says. "We didn't study nation building in college." Maybe that was the problem the Soviets faced in the 1980s. They weren't trying to scare and scatter Afghans, after all; they were trying to turn Afghanistan into a modern, industrialized, educated, socialist nation. Maybe we should let the Russians try again (hold the socialism). That would make Vladimir Putin feel like a member of the Great Power Club and would keep him too busy to fiddle in the Balkans, prop up Belarus dictatorships, or pester Latvia about NATO expansion.

Meanwhile, what's next for us? Do we behave as we did after the Gulf War and just go home, have a recession, and elect Kathleen Kennedy Townsend as the next President of the United States? Or do we finish the War on Terrorism?

Go to the U.S. Department of State Web site and print out the "Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism" (from *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000*) released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism last April. Opportunities to achieve closure would seem to abound.

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism ... It provided increasing support to numerous terrorist groups, including the Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) ... Syria continued to provide safehaven and support to several terrorist groups ... Sudan continued to serve as a safehaven for

members of al-Qaida, the Lebanese Hizballah ... Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the PIJ, and HAMAS ...

Or am I wrong? Because I've heard that all these nations are helping us to fight terrorism now.

Anyway, we are told, this is not a war between Western civilization and the Muslim world. There is, nonetheless, interesting reading to be done in *Freedom in the World*, a survey of political rights and civil liberties issued annually since 1955 by the nonpartisan organization Freedom House. Among countries whose populations are predominantly (60 percent or more) Muslim only remote Mali and tiny Benin are rated as "Free." On a scale of 1 (Canada) to 7 (god-awful), no other Muslim country receives a score better than 3 in political rights and 4 in civil liberties.

But perhaps these ratings are out of date. The world has changed so much of late. For example, a peace vigil is now held each Saturday at noon outside the town offices in Peterborough, New Hampshire. According to the November 15 edition of the *Monadnock Ledger*, "One week, when it was rumored that CBS might cover the protesters, 45 people showed up." By Saturday, November 17, the peace protest had in effect turned into a victory protest, and eight people were present. There was one sweet-faced, white-haired old lady and then another, so much older that she looked as if she might have been doing this sort of thing since the Hitler-Stalin Pact. There was a middle-aged man with hair that was both very long and gone from half of his head, a middle-aged woman on whose features smugness had made an extensive and permanent settlement, a young man whose devil-may-care sideburns clashed with his go-to-hell golf pants, and a tweedy professor type who spent the whole vigil reading a magazine. Plus there was a mom in hand-knits trying to keep an eye on a rapidly fidgeting eight-year-old, and an Asian woman of college age who carried a sign reading RETALIATE WITH WORLD PEACE. Considering how world peace has gone in many places for the past fifty-odd years, that's a harsh sentiment. After a while the Asian woman wandered off to window-shop.



Most Peterboroughians were ignoring the vigil with the perfect obliviousness to all incongruity that has been a New England hallmark since Henry David Thoreau went off to live a hermit's life at Walden Pond but continued to have his mother do his laundry. Only one fellow, flannel-clad, stopped to argue with the pacifists. "What do you do," the fellow asked, "when they strike the homeland? What if they roll right in here with tanks?" I was just about to think *Good for you* when the fellow went on to say, "But I'll tell you one thing, I've refused to get the anthrax shots."

So we see at what level debate about a just war and a natural right of self-defense is being conducted these days. The next morning, in a further sign of the times, Boston's WBZ Radio played a recorded segment by Martha Stewart detailing the intricacies of flag etiquette. The *New York Times* "Sunday Styles" section could not resist a bow to the New Seriousness—or an Afghanistan hook—even when reviewing the stupidest possible television show.

First, network news programs broadcast images of Afghan women removing their burkas ... A few hours later ... models had peeled away their clothing and were showing off thong panties as ABC broadcast the Victoria's Secret fashion show ...

And the November 20 edition of *The National Enquirer* had a feature

headed "EVEN PETS ARE STRESSED OUT FROM TERRORIST ATTACKS." Here are some of the signs that your dog, cat, or hamster may be suffering the after-effects of 9/11:

- Sadness or glumness.
- Constant fighting with other pets.
- Lapses in toilet training.
- Pet is more needy and constantly seeks attention.

Speaking of constantly seeking attention, Bill Clinton showed up to give a talk at Harvard on November 19, perhaps to share anecdotes about his being a star quarterback on the intrepid Crimson gridiron squad of warrior lineage ancient. *The Boston Globe* didn't mention his football heroics but did give Bill two fulsome stories and a teaser: "Fans flock to Clinton in Hub visit." Bill "blamed himself for not building stronger ties with the Muslim world during the 1990s," according to the *Globe*. "He said he should have worked harder ... to support overseas 'nation building.'" In these days of flux and transformation there is comfort in knowing that some things stay the same. It's still all about Bill.

LOSING THE CODE WAR

The great age of code breaking is over—and with it much of our ability to track the communications of our enemies

.....

Within days of the September 11 attacks U.S. intelligence agencies were being blamed in many quarters for their failure to detect the terrorists' plans in advance. Mistakes in the formulation and execution of intelligence policy were no doubt made. Yet there is no one to blame for what is probably by far the greatest setback in recent years to American capabilities for keeping tabs on terrorists: the fact that it is now virtually impossible to break the encrypted communication systems that PCs and the Internet have made available to everyone—including, apparently, al Qaeda. The real culprits behind this intelligence failing are the advance of technology and the laws of mathematics.

For more than a decade the National Security Agency has been keenly

"America can exert influence, he said, by admitting its own faults." Interesting source for that advice. "We cannot engage in this debate," Bill was quoted as saying, "without admitting that there are excesses in our contemporary culture." Whether the ex-President was referring to himself or to the Victoria's Secret fashion show was not made clear.

During a question-and-answer period Clinton said that he supported the creation of a Palestinian state. This may be a better idea than he realizes. Now that Iran, Syria, and Sudan are on our side, the Lebanese Hizbollah, Hamas, the Palestine Islamic Jihad, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and al Qaeda will need someplace to go. Having them all in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would certainly narrow the focus for air strikes by the anti-terrorism alliance and allow multi-national ground-troop operations to be conducted in a compact area with well-mapped terrain and an excellent road system. As long as the Israelis don't get involved. We don't want anybody on our side who was guilty of premature anti-terrorism.

aware that the battle of wits between code users and code breakers was tipping ineluctably in favor of the code users. Their victory has been clinched by the powerful encryption software now incorporated in most commercial e-mail and Web-browser programs.

It has always been theoretically possible to produce a completely unbreakable code, but only at considerable inconvenience. In the 1920s two groups of code users,

Soviet spies and German diplomats, became aware of the vulnerability of their existing systems and began to rely on what are known as one-time pads. In this system sender and receiver are supplied with matching pages containing strings of numbers; each page is used as a key for encoding and decoding a single message and then discarded. If prop-

INTELLIGENCE
**STEPHEN
BUDIANSKY**

erly used, this scheme is unbreakable. Yet in practice corners were invariably cut, because the system was logistically complicated, involving—among other things—teams of couriers to deliver new one-time pads as the old ones were used up.

Until the end of the twentieth century any more practical coding system that could be devised was susceptible to a basic flaw that a skilled code breaker could exploit. Language is extremely patterned—certain letters and words occur far more often than others. The essential task of a code key is to disguise that nonrandomness. The key might, for example, consist of a long string of random numbers specifying where in the alphabet each letter of the message text should be shifted. If the first letter of the message were *A* and the first key number 3, then that *A* would become *D* in the coded version of the text; if the fourth letter were *A* and the fourth key number 5, then that *A* would become *F*; and so on. Many schemes were developed to provide users with very long key strings, in an attempt to approach the security offered by the one-time pad. Some systems used code books containing tens of thousands of key numbers; others, such as the famous German Enigma machine of World War II, used rotating wheels containing wires and electrical contacts to generate a sequence of permutations.

Yet eventually some of the strings of key would have to be used in more than one message, and when they were, the underlying patterns of language would begin to glow dimly through. The history of twentieth-century code breaking is at its heart the development of a series of increasingly sophisticated mathematical methods to detect non-randomness. The best code breakers were usually able to keep pace with the latest advances in code making, because of the practical limitations of producing very long strings of truly random, non-repeating key. The Enigma machine could be reset each day to one of a million million million million different key-string permutations, yet because of the machine's reliance on mechanically rotating wheels, those different combinations were not completely random or independent; subtle mathematical rela-

tionships connected one combination to another, and Allied code breakers were able to develop a brilliant mathematical technique that required them to test only a few thousand different combinations to break each day's setting. In effect, they discovered a shortcut, much like a safecracker's using a stethoscope to listen to the tumblers fall rather than attempting the "brute force" approach of trying every single combination.

But the postwar advent of general-purpose computers—stimulated by funding from the NSA—began a process that by the end of the century gave code makers an unassailable lead.

hours to break a message that was encoded in a version of DES that chooses from some 72 quadrillion possible keys for enciphering each message. (The number of possible keys available in a computer-generated code is typically measured in terms of the length of the binary numeral required to specify which key sequence to use; fifty-six bits give about 72 quadrillion combinations, so this version is called 56-bit DES.) That feat was hailed as a great technological triumph, and it undoubtedly was one. It was also clearly intended to make a statement—namely, that DES, which the U.S. government had promulgated, was



At first, when the extremely high price of computers ensured that government agencies would always have a commanding technological lead over the public, computers enabled the code breakers to abandon much subtlety in favor of brute force: the computers could simply run through every possible key setting to find the one that worked. But this was ultimately a losing proposition, because in terms of computing power it is always cheaper and easier to generate longer and longer keys than it is to test longer and longer keys. Once computers became widely available, the game was over.

In 1998 a team of private-sector computer experts built a special-purpose computer that could test 92 billion different key sequences per second in the widely used Data Encryption Standard system, a mainstay of encoding for commercial electronic traffic, such as bank transfers. It took them fifty-six

deliberately designed to keep ordinary code users from employing anything too hard for the NSA to break. But there was an utterly trivial fix that DES users could employ if they were worried about security: they could simply encrypt each message twice, turning 56-bit DES into 112-bit DES, and squaring the number of key sequences that a code breaker would have to try. Messages could even be encrypted thrice; and, indeed, many financial institutions at the time were already using "Triple DES."

Issued in 1977, DES was originally implemented in a computer chip, which made it possible at least in principle to control the spread of encryption technology through export restrictions. Huge increases in the processing power of PCs, however, subsequently made it easy to realize much more complex encryption schemes purely in software, and the Internet made it practically impossible to prevent the rapid spread of such soft-

ware to anyone who wanted it. Today most Web browsers use 128-bit encryption as the basic standard; a brute-force attack would take the world's fastest supercomputer something like a trillion years at present. If someone develops a supercomputer that is twice as fast, a code user need only start using 129-bit encryption to maintain the same relative advantage.

The standard e-mail encryption software, supplied with most computers, is the PGP ("pretty good privacy") system. In its latest version it is actually considerably better than pretty good. Users can select 2048-bit (equivalent to a little less than 128-bit DES) or even 4096-bit (equivalent to significantly more than 128-bit DES) keys.

Osama bin Laden's network is suspected of employing additional methods to veil its communications. Some reports suggest that al Qaeda not only used encrypted e-mail but also hid encrypted message texts within picture files or other data that could be downloaded from a Web site.

The implications of this fundamental shift in the balance of cryptologic power between the spies and the spied-upon are profound. Before World War II most Western governments and their military officials looked on intelligence with considerable contempt if they paid attention to it at all. Information from paid spies has always been notoriously unreliable—colored by ineptness, by a mercenary calculation of what the customer wants to hear, and sometimes by outright deceit. The explosion of intelligence from decoded enemy signals that took place during World War II, however, revolutionized both the profession of intelligence gathering and its impact. Signals intelligence was information coming unfiltered from the mouth of the enemy; its objectivity and authenticity were unparalleled. The proof was in the payoff. The victory at Midway, the sinking of scores of Japanese and German submarines, the rout of Rommel across North Africa, the success of D-Day—all depended directly and crucially on intelligence from decoded Axis communications.

Signals intelligence is not completely dead, of course: bad guys make mistakes;

they sometimes still use the phone or radio when they need to communicate in a hurry; and a surprising amount of useful intelligence can be gleaned from analyzing communication patterns even if the content of the communications is unreadable. Still, if encrypted-signals intelligence is to continue to provide information about enemy plans and organization, it must be accompanied by a significant increase in direct undercover operations. A hint of things to come emerged this past summer in the federal criminal trial of Nicodemo Scarfo Jr., who faces charges of running gambling and loan-sharking operations for the Gambino crime family. Federal agents, discovering that Scarfo kept records of his business in encrypted files on his PC, obtained a court order to surreptitiously install on his computer what was identified in court papers as a "key-logger system." The system (whether hardware or software is unclear) apparently recorded every keystroke typed into the computer, eventually enabling FBI agents to recover the password Scarfo used with his encryption software. Planting such electronic bugs directly in computers, or perhaps even sabotaging encryption software with a "back door" that code breakers could exploit, would generally require direct access to the machines. A plan proposed by the Clinton Administration would have obviated the need for direct access. But the plan, which would have required all American makers of encryption software to install a back door accessible by U.S. intelligence agencies acting with court approval, was abandoned, in part because of the argument that the requirement would not apply to foreign software makers, who are now perfectly capable of equaling the most sophisticated American-made commercial encryption software.

An effort in the Senate to revive that plan and include it in the anti-terrorism bill that was signed into law October 26 received little support and was withdrawn, and on much the same grounds—that however powerful an intelligence tool code breaking was during its golden age, in World War II and the Cold War, the technical reality is that those days are gone. Code breaking simply cannot work the magic it once did. ▀



Gardens for Soccer Moms (and Dads)

It is possible to have a lovely garden even when you're pressed for time. The secret is to select plants with sturdy dispositions and long seasons of bloom, tuck them together into a sunny, well-drained spot, and then enjoy them when you can. Our offering of more than 700 varieties of annuals, perennials, shrubs, and bulbs includes many dozens of varieties that meet these criteria, and we provide color photos, detailed cultural information, and design suggestions to aid your choice. And, of course, we deliver at precisely the right time for planting, so you don't have to waste a spring Saturday at the garden center. Every selection is guaranteed to perform, or your money back.

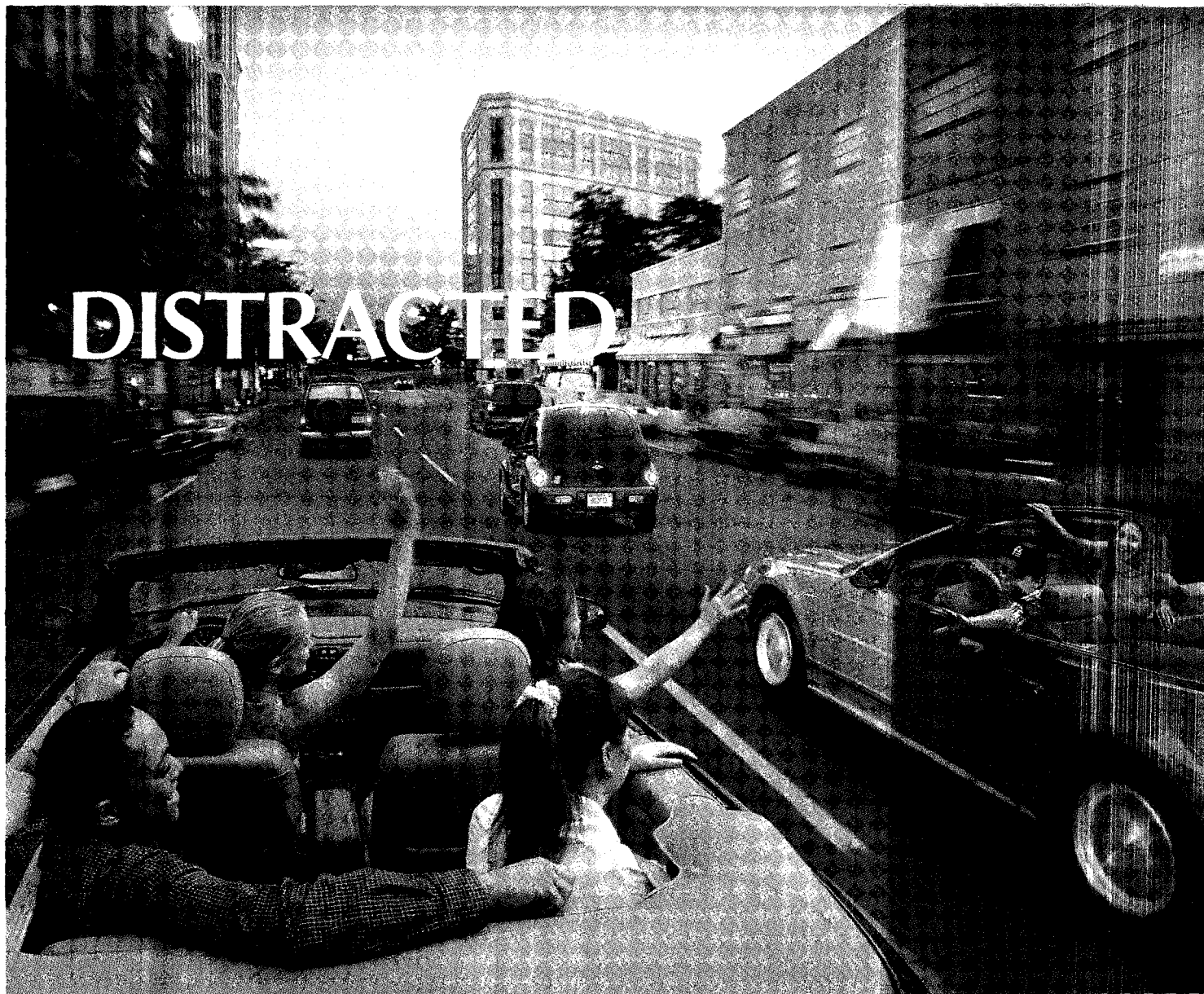
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Sincerely, Amos Pettingill

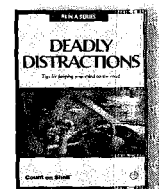
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OH, GODS!

Religion didn't begin to wither away during the twentieth century, as some academic experts had prophesied. Far from it. And the new century will probably see religion explode—in both intensity and variety. New religions are springing up everywhere. Old ones are mutating with Darwinian restlessness. And the big “problem religion” of the twenty-first century may not be the one you think

BY TOBY LESTER

Illustrations by Edward Sorel

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In 1851 the French historian and philosopher Ernest Renan announced to the world that Islam was “the last religious creation of humanity.” He was more than a bit premature. At about the time he was writing, the Bahai faith, Christian Science, Mormonism, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and a major Japanese religious movement known as Tenrikyo were all just coming to life. Falun Gong and Pentecostalism—both of which now have millions and millions of members—had yet to emerge. Whoops.

Contemporary theories of social and political behavior tend to be almost willfully blind to the constantly evolving role of religion as a force in global affairs. The assumption is that advances in the rational understanding of the world will inevitably diminish the influence of that last, vexing sphere of irrationality in human culture: religion. Inconveniently, however, the world is today as awash in religious novelty, flux, and dynamism as it has ever been—and religious change is, if anything, likely to intensify in the coming decades. The spectacular emergence of militant Islamist movements during the twentieth century is surely only a first indication of how quickly, and with what profound implications, change can occur.

It's tempting to conceive of the religious world—particularly when there is so much talk of clashing civilizations—as being made up primarily of a few well-delineated and static religious blocs: Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and so on. But that's dangerously simplistic. It assumes a stability in the religious landscape that is completely at odds with reality. New religions are born all the time. Old ones transform themselves dramatically. Schism, evolution, death, and rebirth are the norm. And this doesn't apply only to religious groups that one often hears referred to as cults. Today hundreds of widely divergent forms of Christianity are practiced around the world. Islam is usually talked about in monolithic terms (or, at most, in terms of the Shia-Sunni divide), but one almost never hears about the 50 million or so members of the Naqshabandiya order

of Sufi Islam, which is strong in Central Asia and India, or about the more than 20 million members of various schismatic Muslim groups around the world. Think, too, about the strange rise and fall of the Taliban. Buddhism, far from being an all-encompassing glow radiating benignly out of the East, is a vast family of religions made up of more than 200 distinct bodies, many of which don't see eye-to-eye at all. Major strands of Hinduism were profoundly reshaped in the nineteenth century, revealing strong Western and Christian influences.

The fact is that religion mutates with Darwinian restlessness. Take a long enough view, and all talk of “established” or “traditional” faith becomes oxymoronic: there's no reason to think that the religious movements of today are any less subject to change than were the religious movements of hundreds or even thousands of years ago. History bears this out. Early Christianity was deemed pathetic by the religious establishment: Pliny the Younger wrote to the Roman Emperor Trajan that he could get nothing out of Christian captives but “depraved, excessive superstition.” Islam, initially the faith of a band of little-known desert Arabs, astonished the whole world with its rapid spread. Protestantism started out as a note of protest nailed to a door. In 1871 Ralph Waldo Emerson dismissed Mormonism as nothing more than an “after-clap of Puritanism.” Up until the 1940s Pentecostals were often dismissed as “holy rollers,” but today the *World Christian Encyclopedia* suggests that by 2050 there may be more than a billion people affiliated with the movement. In the period after World War II so many new religious movements came into being in Japan that local scholars of religion were forced to distinguish between *shin-shukyo* (“new religions”) and *shin-shin-shukyo* (“new new religions”); one Western writer referred to the time as “the rush hour of the gods.” The implication is clear: what is now dismissed as a fundamentalist sect, a fanatical cult, or a mushy New Age fad could become the next big thing.

Anybody who doubts the degree to which the religious world is evolving should have a look at the second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, published last year by Oxford University Press in two oversized volumes of more than 800 pages each. The encyclopedia's title is misleading: the work is not devoted exclusively to Christianity. It is, in fact, the only serious reference work in existence that attempts both to survey and to analyze the present religious makeup of the entire world. It tracks the birth of new movements, records recent growth patterns, and offers scenarios for future growth. It divides major religions into different denominations and classifies each by country of origin and global reach. It records the dates that movements were founded and the names of their founders. It's the place to turn if you want to know how many Bahais there were in 2000 in the Bahamas (1,241), how many Jews in Yemen (1,087), how many Zoroastrians in Iran (1,903,182), how many Mormons in South Africa (10,200), or how many Buddhists in the United States (2,449,570).

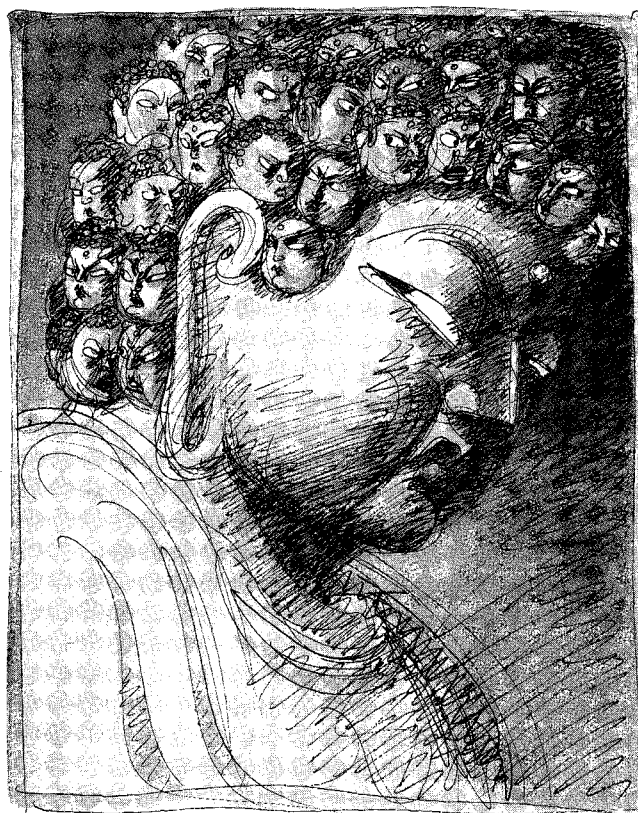
The prime mover and longtime editor of the encyclopedia is a soft-spoken Anglican Charismatic named David B. Barrett. A former missionary in Africa, Barrett began working on the encyclopedia in the 1960s. His idea, which explains the work's title, was to create a reliable and richly informative tool for Christian evangelists around the world. Barrett is now affiliated with the Global Evangelization Movement, in Richmond, Virginia, and with Pat Robertson's Regent University, in Virginia Beach, where he is a research professor of "missiometrics"—the science of missions.

I recently asked Barrett what he has learned about religious change in his decades of working on the encyclopedia. "The main thing we've discovered," he said, "is that there is enormous religious change going on across the world, all the time. It's massive, it's complex, and it's continual. We have identified nine thousand and nine hundred distinct and separate religions in the world, increasing by two or three new religions every day. What this means is that new religious movements are not just a curiosity, which is what people in the older denominations usually think they are. They are a very serious subject."

THE SECULARIZATION MYTH

Long the subject of ridicule and persecution, derided as cults, alternative religions are finally being taken seriously. The study of new religious movements—NRMs for short—has become a growth industry. NRM scholars come from a variety of backgrounds, but many are sociologists and religious historians. All are sympathetic to the idea that new religious movements should be respected, protected, and studied carefully. They tend to avoid the words "cult" and "sect," because of the polemical connotations; as a result NRM scholars are often caricatured in anti-cult circles as "cult apologists." They examine such matters as how new movements arise; what internal dynamics are at work as the movements evolve; how they spread and grow; how societies react to them; and how and why they move toward the mainstream.

The NRM field is only a few decades old, but already it has made its mark. NRM scholars were pivotal in the de-fanging of the anti-cult movement in the United States, which exercised considerable influence in the 1970s and 1980s and often engaged in the illegal—but frequently tolerated—practice of kidnapping and "de-programming" members of new religious movements. In the aftermath of Waco, of the Heaven's Gate and Solar Temple suicides, and of the subway poisonings in Tokyo by Aum Shinrikyo, NRM



scholars are now regularly consulted by the FBI, Scotland Yard, and other law-enforcement agencies hoping to avoid future tragedies. They are currently battling the major anti-cult legislation—directed explicitly at the "repression of cultic movements which undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms"—that was passed last year in France. (The legislation was implicitly rooted in a blacklist compiled in 1996 by a French parliamentary commission. The blacklist targets 173 movements, including the Center for Gnostic Studies, the Hare Krishnas, some evangelical Protestant groups, practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, Rosicrucians, Scientologists, Wiccans, and the Jehovah's Witnesses.)

NRM scholars have even influenced the Vatican. In 1991, as part of what was then the largest gathering of Catholic cardinals in the history of the Church, an Extraordinary Consistory was held to discuss just two matters:

the “threats to life” (that is, contraception, euthanasia, and abortion) and the challenges posed to the Church by “neo-religious, quasi-religious and pseudo-religious groups.” NRM scholars were involved as advisers, and the result was a surprisingly liberal report, written by Cardinal Arinze, that referred to “New Religious Movements” rather than to “cults” or “sects” and even suggested that these movements have something to teach the Church. “The dynamism of their missionary drive,” the report said of the NRMs, “the evangelistic responsibility assigned to the new ‘converts,’ their use of the mass media and their setting of the objectives to be attained, should make us ask ourselves questions as to how to make more dynamic the missionary activity of the Church.”

That dynamism also speaks to one of the significant facts of our time: the failure of religion to wither away on schedule. This is a state of affairs that the sociologist Rodney Stark addresses in the book *Acts of Faith* (2000). “For nearly three centuries,” he writes, “social scientists and assorted Western intellectuals have been promising the end of religion. Each generation has been confident that within another few decades, or possibly a bit longer, humans will ‘outgrow’ belief in the supernatural. This proposition soon came to be known as the secularization thesis.” Stark goes on to cite a series of failed prophecies about the impending demise of religion, concluding with a statement made by the American sociologist Peter Berger, who in 1968 told *The New York Times* that by “the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture.”

Secularization of a sort certainly has occurred in the modern world—but religion seems to keep adapting to new social ecosystems, in a process one might refer to as “supernatural selection.” It shows no sign of extinction, and “theodiversity” is, if anything, on the rise. How can this be? Three decades ago the British sociologist Colin Campbell suggested an answer. A way to explore the apparently paradoxical relationship between secularization and religion, Campbell felt, might be to examine closely what happens on the religious fringe, where new movements are born. “Ironically enough,” he wrote, “it could be that the very processes of secularization which have been responsible for the ‘cutting back’ of the established form of religion have actually allowed ‘hardier varieties’ to flourish.”

A THEODIVERSITY SAMPLER

The variety of flourishing new religious movements around the world is astonishing and largely unrecognized in the West. The groups that generally grab all the attention—Moonies, Scientologists, Hare Krishnas, Wiccans—amount to a tiny and not particularly significant proportion of what’s out there. Here are just a few representatively diverse examples of new movements from around the world:

THE AHMADIS. A messianic Muslim sect based in Pakistan, with perhaps eight million members in seventy countries, the Ahmadi movement was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a Punjabi Muslim who began receiving divine revelations in 1876. “In order to win the pleasure of Allah,” he wrote, “I hereby inform you all of the important fact that Almighty God has, at the beginning of this 14th century [in the Islamic calendar], appointed me from Himself for the revival and support of the true faith of Islam.” Ahmad claimed to have been brought to earth as “the Imam of the age today who must, under Divine Command, be obeyed by all Muslims.” Members of the movement are considered heretics by most Muslims and are persecuted accordingly. They are barred entry to Mecca. In the Ahmadi version of religious history Jesus escaped from the cross and made his way to India, where he died at the age of 120.

THE BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY. A prosperous ascetic meditation movement based in India, with some 500,000 members (mostly women) worldwide, the group was founded by Dada Lekh Raj, a Hindu diamond merchant who in the 1930s experienced a series of powerful visions revealing “the mysterious entity of God and explaining the process of world transformation.” Its establishment was originally rooted in a desire to give self-determination and self-esteem to Indian women. Members wear white, abstain from meat and sex, and are committed to social-welfare projects. They believe in an eternal, karmic scheme of time that involves recurring 1,250-year cycles through a Golden Age (perfection), a Silver Age (incipient degeneration), a Copper Age (decadence ascendant), and an Iron Age (rampant violence, greed, and lust—our present state). The group is recognized as a nongovernmental organization by the United Nations, with which it often works.

CAO DAI. A syncretistic religion based in Vietnam, with more than three million members in fifty countries, Cao Dai combines the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, and also builds on elements of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Geniism. The movement was formally established in 1926, six years after a government functionary named Ngo Ming Chieu received a revelation from Duc Cao Dai, the Supreme Being, during a table-moving séance. The movement’s institutional structure is based on that of the Catholic Church: its headquarters are called the Holy See, and its members are led by a pope, six cardinals, thirty-six archbishops, seventy-two bishops, and 3,000 priests. Cao Dai is elaborately ritualized and symbolic—a blend of incense, candles, multi-tiered altars, yin and yang, karmic cycles, séances for communication with the spirit world, and prayers to a pantheon of divine beings, including the Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Quan Am, Ly Thai Bach, Quan Thanh De Quan, and Jesus Christ. Its “Three Saints” are Sun Yat-sen; a sixteenth-century Vietnamese poet named

Trang Trinh; and Victor Hugo. The movement gained more adherents in its first year of existence than Catholic missionaries had attracted during the Church's previous 300 years in Vietnam.

THE RAËLIANS. A growing new international UFO-oriented movement based in Canada, with perhaps 55,000 members worldwide, primarily in Quebec, French-speaking Europe, and Japan, the group was founded in 1973 by Raël, a French race-car journalist formerly known as Claude Vorilhon. Raël claims that in December of 1973, in the dish of a French volcano called Puy-de-Lassolas, he was taken onto a flying saucer, where he met a four-foot humanoid extraterrestrial with olive-colored skin, almond-shaped eyes, and long dark hair. The extraterrestrial's first words, in fluent French, were "You regret not having brought your camera?" On six successive days Raël had conversations with the extraterrestrial, from whom he learned that the human race was the creation (by means of DNA manipulation) of beings known as the Elohim—a word that was mistranslated in the Bible as "God" and actually means "those who came from the sky." Past prophets such as Moses, the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad had been given their revelations and training by the Elohim, who would now like to get to know their creations on equal terms, and demystify "the old concept of God." To that end the Raëlians have raised the money to build "the first embassy to welcome people from space." (Originally Raël was told that the embassy should be near Jerusalem, but Israel has been less than cooperative, and a recent revelation has led Raël to investigate Hawaii as a possibility.) Raël has also recently attracted international attention by creating Clonaid, a company devoted to the goal of cloning a human being.

SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL. A wealthy form of this-worldly Buddhism, based in Japan and rooted in the teachings of the thirteenth-century Buddhist monk Nichiren, Soka Gakkai has some 18 million members in 115 countries. It was founded in 1930 by Makiguchi Tsunesaburo and Toda Josei and then re-established after World War II, at which point it began to grow dramatically. "*Soka gakkai*" means "value-creating society," and the movement's members believe that true Buddhists should work not to escape earthly experience but, rather, to embrace and transform it into enlightened wisdom. Early members were criticized for their goal of worldwide conversion and their aggressive approach to evangelism, a strategy referred to as *shakubuku*, or "break through and overcome." In recent years the intensity has diminished. The movement is strongly but unofficially linked to New Komeito ("Clean Government Party"), currently the third most powerful group in the Japanese parliament. It is also registered as an NGO with the United Nations, and recently opened a major new liberal-arts university in southern California.

THE TORONTO BLESSING. An unorthodox new evangelistic Christian Charismatic movement, based in Canada, the movement emerged in 1994 within the Toronto Airport branch of the Vineyard Church (itself a remarkably successful NRM founded in 1974), after a service delivered by a Florida-based preacher named Rodney Howard Browne. To date about 300,000 people have visited the movement's main church. Services often induce "a move of the Holy Spirit" that can trigger uncontrollable laughter, apparent drunkenness, barking like a dog, and roaring like a lion. The group finds support for its practices in passages from the Bible's Book of Acts, among them "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" and "Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'" The Vineyard Church no longer recognizes the Toronto Blessing as an affiliate, but the two groups, like many other new Christian movements, put a markedly similar emphasis on spontaneity, informality, evangelism, and a lack of traditional organizational hierarchy.

UMBANDA. A major syncretistic movement of spirit worship and spirit healing based in Brazil, with perhaps 20 million members in twenty-two countries, Umbanda emerged as an identifiable movement in the 1920s. It fuses traditional African religion (notably Yoruban) with native South American beliefs, elements of Catholicism, and the spiritist ideas of the French philosopher Allan Kardec. In 1857 Kardec published, in *The Spirits' Book*, transcripts of philosophical and scientific conversations he claimed to have had (using mediums from around the world) with members of the spirit world. The movement grew phenomenally in the twentieth century and is sometimes considered the "national religion of Brazil," uniting the country's many races and faiths.

RELIGIOUS AMOEBAS

Last April, hoping to learn more about such groups and the people who study them, I attended an academic conference devoted to new religious movements and religious pluralism. The event, held at the London School of Economics, was put together and hosted by an influential British organization called the Information Network Focus on Religious Movements (INFORM), in cooperation with an Italian group known as the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR). The conference sessions were dominated by a clubby international crew of NRM scholars who travel around the world presenting papers to one another. The American, English, formerly Soviet, and Japanese contingents seemed particularly strong. People regularly referred to articles that they had published or read in the new journal *Nova Religio*, a major outlet for NRM scholarship. Much of the buzz in the corridors had to do with the French anti-cult legislation, which was soon to be

voted on. Everywhere I turned I seemed to bump into avuncular bearded American sociologists. "I'm so damn sick of the cult-anti-cult debate, I could just puke!" one of them told me heatedly over dinner, gesticulating with his fork. I hadn't brought the subject up.

What made the London conference distinctive was its nonacademic participants. At the opening reception I drank orange juice and munched on potato skins with a tall Swedish woman who had introduced herself to me as a member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—a Hare Krishna. I was joined at lunch one day by a nondescript elderly gentleman in a coat and tie who turned out to be a wry Latvian neo-pagan. Among the others I came across were European Bahais, British Moonies, a Jewish convert to the Family (a sort of "Jesus Freak" offshoot formerly known as the Children of God), members of a small messianic community known as the Twelve Tribes, and several representatives from the Church of Scientology, including the director of its European human-rights office. (Scientology is trying hard to gain formal status as a religion in Europe and the former Soviet Union, but many countries—notably France, Germany, and Russia—consider it a cult to be eradicated.)

That sounds like an exotic cast of characters, but actually it wasn't. The NRM members I encountered at the London conference were no more or less eccentric, interesting, or threatening than any of the people I rode with every morning on the London Underground. I found this oddly oppressive; I thought I'd be getting strangeness and mystery, but instead I got an essential human blandness. The people I met were just people.

This was a point made explicitly by the conference's organizer, Eileen Barker, an eminent British sociologist based at the London School of Economics. Barker is a genial and apparently tireless scholar who is often credited with having popularized the academic use of the term "new religious movement." She made a name for herself in 1984, with her influential book-length study *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* (the answer was choice), and she now devotes most of her spare time to INFORM, which she founded. The group is dedicated to making available—to concerned relatives, government officials, law-

enforcement agencies, the media, representatives of mainstream religions, researchers, and many others—balanced, accurate, and up-to-date information on NRMs from around the world. Speaking at one of the conference sessions, Barker emphatically reminded her audience of "just how very ordinary the people in the cult scene are." When I asked her later about this remark, she elaborated.

"New religious movements aren't always as exotic as they are made out to be," she said. "Or, indeed, as they *themselves* would make themselves out to be. They're interesting in that they're offering something that, they claim, quite often correctly, isn't on sale in the general mainstream religions. So almost by definition there's a sort of curiosity value about them.

They're comparatively easy to study—I knew pretty well all of the Moonies in Britain by the time I completed my study of them. They're interesting because you can see a whole lot of social processes going on: conversion, leaving, bureaucratization, leadership squabbles, ways in which authority is used, ways in which people can change, the difference that people born *into* a religion can make."

I asked a lot of the scholars at the conference why they thought it was important to study new religious movements. Perhaps the most succinct answer came from Susan Palmer, a Canadian who in recent years has become an expert on the Raëlians (and whose ancestors were Mormon polygamists who

fled U.S. persecution in the nineteenth century). "If you're interested in studying religion," she told me, "NRMs are a great place to start. Their history is really short, they don't have that many members, their leader is usually still alive, and you can see the evolution of their rituals and their doctrines. It's a bit like dissecting amoebas instead of zebras."

The ultimate dream for any ambitious student of NRMs, of course, is to discover and monitor the very early stirrings of a new movement and then to track it as it evolves and spreads around the globe. Everybody acknowledges how unlikely this is. But the idea that it *could* happen is irresistible. One scholar I met in London who admitted to harboring such hopes was Jean-François Mayer, a tall, bearded, boyishly enthusiastic lecturer in religious studies at the University of Fribourg, in Switzerland. For the past twenty years Mayer has been following a small French movement



known as the Revelation of Arès. Founded in 1974 by a former Catholic deacon named Michel Potay, and based near Bordeaux, the movement describes itself as the corrective culmination of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. "It is an NRM," Mayer told me, "that has all of the constitutive elements of a new religion of the book: new scriptures incorporating previously revealed scriptures, new rituals, and a new place of pilgrimage. When I study such a group, I see such obvious similarities with the birth of Christianity and the birth of Islam that for me it's fascinating and exciting. Sometimes I let myself think that I might be witnessing something similar at its initial stage." Even if the movement doesn't take off—which, Mayer readily admits, is likely—it is a perfect example of what many NRM scholars like to study.

What have the NRM scholars learned? The literature is copious and varied, but several ideas recur again and again. In an environment of religious freedom NRMs emerge constantly and are the primary agents of religious change. They tend to respond quickly and directly to the evolving spiri-

tual demands of the times. It is often said that they are "midwives of new sensibilities." They exist at a high level of tension with society, but they nevertheless represent social and spiritual reconfigurations that are already under way—or, to put it differently, they almost never emerge out of thin air. Their views can rapidly shift from being considered deviant to being considered orthodox. The people who join NRMs tend to be young, well educated, and relatively affluent. They also tend to have been born into an established religious order but to profess a lack of religious belief prior to joining. They are drawn to new religious movements primarily for social reasons rather than theological ones—usually because of the participation of friends or family members. And (*pace* the anti-cultists) most of them soon leave of their own free will.

This last phenomenon is profoundly symptomatic. Because the fact is that almost all new religious movements fail.

THE RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE

The sociologist Rodney Stark is one of the few people who have been willing to develop specific ideas about what makes new religious movements succeed. This is inherently speculative territory (as with stocks, past performance is no guarantee of future returns), but it also has the potential to be one of the most interesting areas of NRM scholarship, in that such ideas can be applied to all religious movements.

Stark, a professor of sociology and comparative religion at the University of Washington, is blunt, amiable, and a classically American maverick. He does scholarship with an often irreverent swagger. Knowing that he had written specifically on how and why religious movements succeed, I called him and asked him to summarize his thoughts on the subject. "The main thing you've got to recognize," he told me, "is that success is really about relationships and *not* about faith. What happens is that people form relationships and only then come to embrace a religion. It doesn't happen the other way around. That's really critical, and it's something that you can only learn by going out and watching people convert to new movements. We would never, ever, have figured that out in the library. You can never find that sort of thing out after the fact—because after the fact people *do* think it's about faith. And they're not lying, by the way. They're just projecting backwards.

"Something else: give people things to do. The folks in the Vineyard are geniuses at that. It's quite an adventure to go off somewhere and set up a new church for them. The Mormons are great at giving people things to do too. You know, they not only tithe money but they also tithe time. They do an enormous amount of social services for one another, all of which builds community bonds. It also gives you this incredible sense of security—I'm going to be okay when I'm in a position of need; there are going to be people to look out for me. That makes a difference. And if you want to build commitment,

CRAYFISH HUNTING

Some small, tucked thing darts
from under a turned stone
before the water can clear
the mud cloud I created
by disturbing that wet dust.

I am too big, hunched over
like an unbalanced heron,
my eyes unfocused to spot
movement, nothing defined
by edges: a contrary streak,

quicker than the current.
How unnatural I must seem,
in rubber boots and a wool coat,
to the wading birds, patiently
waiting for their turn in this stream.

Still, I must have some role
in the autumn afternoon,
my arms wet to the elbows,
reaching into this cold water
that has given birth to everything.

—JONATHAN MUSGROVE

send your kids out on missions when they're nineteen! Go out and you save the world for two years! Even if you don't get a single convert, it's worth it in terms of the bonds you develop.

"You've also got to have a serious conception of God and the supernatural to succeed. Just having some 'essence of goodness,' like the Tao, isn't going to do it. It just isn't. It doesn't even do it in Asian countries, you know. They hang a whole collection of supernatural beings around these essences. So to succeed you do best by starting with a very active God who's virtuous and makes demands, because people have a tendency to value religions on the basis of cost."

This last idea is at the heart of much of Stark's work. It is a component of the major sociological model for which Stark is perhaps best known: the rational-choice theory of religion, which proposes that in an environment of religious freedom people choose to develop and maintain their religious beliefs in accordance with the laws of a "religious economy." This model of religious history and change, Stark feels, is what should replace the traditional model—which, he has written, is based on the erroneous and fundamentally secular idea of "progress through theological refinement." It's a controversial model (some find the science of economics only dimly enlightening even when applied to financial markets), but it has become a major force in recent theorizing about religion. Many of the presentations at the London conference used it as a starting point.

The essence of the idea is this: People act rationally in choosing their religion. If they are believers, they make a constant cost-benefit analysis, consciously or unconsciously, about what form of religion to practice. Religious beliefs and practices make up the product that is on sale in the market, and current and potential followers are the consumers. In a free-market religious economy there is a healthy abundance of choice (religious pluralism), which leads naturally to vigorous competition and efficient supply (new and old religious movements). The more competition there is, the higher the level of consumption. This would explain the often remarked paradox that the United States is one of the most religious countries in the world but also one of the strongest enforcers of a separation between Church and State.

The conventional wisdom is that religion is the realm of the irrational (in a good or a bad sense, depending on one's point of view), and as such, it can't be studied in the way that other aspects of human behavior are studied. But Stark argues that all of social science is based on the idea that human behavior is essentially explainable, and it therefore makes no sense to exclude a major and apparently constant behavior like religion-building from what should be studied scientifically. The sources of religious experience may well be mysterious, irrational, and highly personal, but religion itself is not. It is a social rather than a psychological phenomenon, and, absent conditions of active repression, it unfolds according to observable rules of group behavior.

I asked Stark if he could give me an example of what's

happening in the contemporary American religious marketplace. "Sure," he said. "I happen to have grown up in Jamestown, North Dakota. When I left, if you had asked me what the religious situation was going to be like a couple of generations later, I would have told you that it would have stayed pretty much the same: the Catholics would be the largest single group, but overall there would be more Protestants than Catholics, with the Methodists and the Presbyterians being the two largest. But that's not what happened at all. Today the Assemblies of God and the Nazarenes are the two biggest religious bodies in Jamestown. These are new religious movements. There were no Mormons in Jamestown when I was a kid, by the way, and now there's a ward hall. There were two families of Jehovah's Witnesses, and now there's a Kingdom Hall. Evangelical Protestants of all kinds have grown a lot. What's happened is that people have changed brands. They've changed suppliers. Writ small, this is what has happened to the country as a whole. There are new religious movements everywhere—and what this tells me is that in a religious free market institutions often go to pot but religion doesn't. Look at the Methodists! They were nothing in 1776, they were everything in 1876, and they were receding in 1976."

Stark has applied his ideas to the study of the history of Christianity. He suggests, in *The Rise of Christianity* (1996), that early Christianity was a rational choice for converts because its emphasis on helping the needy "prompted and sustained attractive, liberating, and effective social relations and organizations." People initially became Christians for a number of rational, nontheological reasons, he argues, and not, he told me, because "two thousand people on a Tuesday afternoon went and heard Saint Paul." People converted because Christianity *worked*. The Christian community put an emphasis on caring for its members, for example; that emphasis allowed it to survive onslaughts of disease better than other communities. People also converted, he writes, because, contrary to the standard version of events, Christianity's initial membership was not drawn predominantly from among the poor. Stark argues that in Roman society Christianity's early members, like members of most other new religious movements, were relatively affluent and highly placed, and thus weren't treated as a social problem to be repressed. In this view, although Christians were subjected to their share of anti-cult persecution, they were largely ignored by the Romans as a political threat and therefore were able quietly to build their membership. Early growth, Stark writes, involved the conversion of many more members of the Jewish community than has traditionally been acknowledged; Christianity offered disaffected Jews a sort of higher-tension new religion that nevertheless maintained continuity with some established Jewish orthodoxies. Why else—rationally speaking—would the Christians have held on to the Old Testament, a sacred text that in so many ways is at theological odds with the New Testament?

Stark has no shortage of critics. Bryan Wilson, a venerable scholar of NRMs based at Oxford, told me that the rational-choice theory of religious economics is “really rather ludicrous” and said that “most European sociologists of religion would quarrel with it.” Steve Bruce, a sociologist based at the University of Aberdeen, in Scotland, has complained about the creeping prevalence of the theory, which he attributes (clearly with Stark in mind) to “the malign influence of a small clique of U.S. sociologists.”

It does seem dangerously easy to approach any subject—love? music?—with a grand rational-choice framework in mind and then suddenly to see everything in terms of a marketplace of “products” subject to the laws of supply and demand. What does such an approach really say about specific situations? And what constitutes “choice” or “supply” anyway? How does being born into a religion, which is what happens to most people, affect the idea of a “free market”? These are questions that will be debated for years. In the meantime, one can safely say that, misguided or not, rational-choice theory is a serious attempt to grapple with the reality of continual and unpredictable religious change.

FUTURE SHOCK

What new religious movements will come to light in the twenty-first century? Who knows? Will that raving, disheveled lunatic you ignored on a street corner last week turn out to be an authentic prophet of the next world faith? All sorts of developments are possible. Catholicism might evolve into a distinctly Charismatic movement rooted primarily in China and headed by an African pope. India’s *Dalits*, formerly known as Untouchables, might convert en masse to Christianity or Buddhism. Africa might become the home of the Anglican Church and of Freemasonry. Much of the Islamic world might veer off in Sufi directions. A neo-Zoroastrian prophet might appear and spark a worldwide revival. Membership of the Mormon Church might become predominantly Latin American or Asian. Scientology might become the informal state religion of California. The Episcopalians might dwindle into something not unlike the Amish or the Hutterites—a tiny religious body whose members have voluntarily cut themselves off from the misguided world around them and have chosen to live in self-sustaining hamlets where they quaintly persist in wearing their distinctive costumes (ties with ducks on them, boat shoes) and in marrying only within the community. The next major religion might involve the worship of an inscrutable numinous entity that emerges on the Internet and swathes the globe in electronic revelation. None of these possibilities is as unlikely as it may sound.

One of the most remarkable changes already taking place because of new religious movements is the under-reported shift in the center of gravity in the Christian world. There has been a dramatic move from North to

South. Christianity is most vital now in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where independent churches, Pentecostalism, and even major Catholic Charismatic movements are expanding rapidly. The story of Christianity in twentieth-century Africa is particularly noteworthy. There were fewer than 10 million Christians in Africa in 1900; by 2000 there were more than 360 million. And something very interesting is happening: ancient Christian practices such as exorcism, spirit healing, and speaking in tongues—all of which are documented in the Book of Acts—are back in force. In classic NRM fashion, some of these Christianity-based movements involve new prophet figures, new sacred texts, new pilgrimage sites, and new forms of worship.

“New movements are not only a part of Christianity but an enormous part of it,” I was told by David Barrett, the editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, when I asked him about Christian NRMs. “According to our estimates, the specifically new independent churches in Christianity number about three hundred and ninety-four million, which is getting on for twenty percent of the Christian world. So it starts to look faintly ridiculous, you see, when the ‘respectable’ Christians start talking patronizingly about these new, ‘strange’ Christians appearing everywhere. In a very short time the people in those movements will be talking the same way about us.”

One of the stock Northern explanations for these new movements has been that they are transitional phases of religious “development” and represent thinly veiled manifestations of still potent primitive superstitions. That’s a line of thinking that Philip Jenkins—a professor of history and religious studies at Penn State, and the author of the forthcoming *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*—dismissed to me as nothing more than a “racist, they’ve-just-come-down-from-the-trees” kind of argument. Recent NRM scholarship suggests a less condescending view: in a lot of places, for a lot of reasons, the new Christianity works. Just as, in Rodney Stark’s opinion, early Christianity spread throughout the vestiges of the Roman Empire because it “prompted and sustained attractive, liberating, and effective social relations and organizations,” these early forms of new Christianity are spreading in much of the post-colonial world in large part because they provide community and foster relationships that help people deal with challenging new social and political realities.

Rosalind I. J. Hackett, who teaches religious studies at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, is a specialist in African religious movements. “African NRMs have been successful,” she told me, “because they help people survive, in all of the ways that people need to survive—social, spiritual, economic, finding a mate. People forget how critical that is. In Western academic circles it’s very fashionable these days to talk about the value of ethnic identity and all that. But that’s a luxury for people trying to feed families. To survive today in Africa people have to be *incredibly* mo-

bile in search of work. One of the very important things that many of these NRMs do is create broad trans-ethnic and trans-national communities, so that when somebody moves from city to city or country to country there's a sort of surrogate family structure in place."

Some of the most successful African Christian NRMs of the twentieth century, such as the Zion Christian Church, based in South Africa, and the Celestial Church of Christ, in Nigeria, are very self-consciously and deliberately African in their forms of worship, but a new wave of African NRMs, Hackett says, now downplays traditional African features and instead promotes modern lifestyles and global evangelism. The International Central Gospel Church, in Ghana, and the Winner's Chapel, in Nigeria, are examples of these churches; their educated, savvy, and charismatic leaders, Mensa Otabil and David Oyedepo, respectively, spend a good deal of time on the international preaching circuit. The emphasis on global evangelism has helped to spur the development of what Hackett has called the "South-South" religious connection. No longer does Christian missionary activity flow primarily from the developed countries of the North to the developing countries of the South. Brazilian Pentecostal movements are evangelizing heavily in Africa. New African movements are setting up shop in Asia. Korean evangelists now outnumber American ones around the world. And so on.

The course of missionary activity is also beginning to flow from South to North. Many new African movements have for some time been establishing themselves in Europe and North America. Some of this can be attributed to immigration, but there's more to the process than that. "Many people just aren't aware of how active African Christian missionaries are in North America," Hackett says. "The Africans hear about secularization and empty churches and they feel sorry for us. So they come and evangelize. The late Archbishop Idahosa [a renowned Nigerian evangelist and the founder of the Church of God Mission, International] once put it to me this way: 'Africa doesn't need God, it needs money. America doesn't need money, it needs God.' That's an oversimplification, but it gets at something important."

David Barrett, too, underscores the significance of the African missionary presence in the United States. "America is honeycombed with African independent churches," he told me. "Immigrants from Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Congo have brought their indigenous churches with them. These are independent denominations that are very vibrant in America. They're tremendous churches, and they're winning all kinds of white members, because it's a very attractive form of Christianity, full of music and movement and color."

Asian and Latin American missionaries of new Christian movements are also moving north. A rapidly growing and controversial Brazilian Pentecostal movement called the

Universal Church of the Kingdom of God—founded in 1977 and often referred to by its Portuguese acronym, IURD—has established an aggressive and successful evangelistic presence in both Europe and North America. A revivalist, anti-institutional movement founded in China in the 1920s and referred to as the Local Church has made considerable inroads in the United States. El Shaddai, a lay Catholic Charismatic movement established in the Philippines in 1984 to compete with Pentecostalism, has now set up shop in twenty-five countries. Another Christian group, the Light of the World Church, a Pentecostal movement based in Mexico, has spread widely in the United States in recent years.



The present rate of growth of the new Christian movements and their geographical range suggest that they will become a major social and political force in the coming century. The potential for misunderstanding and stereotyping is enormous—as it was in the twentieth century with a new religious movement that most people initially ignored. It was called fundamentalist Islam.

"We need to take the new Christianity very seriously," Philip Jenkins told me. "It is *not* just Christianity plus drums. If we're not careful, fifty years from now we may find a largely secular North defining itself against a largely Christian South. This will have its implications."

Such as? I asked.

Jenkins paused, and then made a prediction. "I think," he said, "that the big 'problem cult' of the twenty-first century will be Christianity." ▀

THE KEYSTONE KOMMANDOS

Just months after Pearl Harbor the Third Reich secretly sent two small teams of would-be saboteurs to the United States. Their mission: cripple U.S. industry. But things went badly wrong. What happened is a story of confusion, low comedy, and betrayal—and the creation of a precedent for the military tribunals being proposed by the Bush Administration today

BY GARY COHEN

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The four men arrived by U-boat and landed on a deserted beach near Amagansett, Long Island, in the midnight darkness on Saturday, June 13, 1942, a mere six months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. They had close to \$80,000 (equivalent to nearly a million dollars today) in cash, four boxes of explosives, and a mission that had been planned at the highest levels of the Third Reich—namely, to halt production at key American manufacturing plants, create railroad bottlenecks, disrupt communication lines, and cripple New York City's water-supply system. The mission, audacious in means and scope, had the potential to seriously impede America's military buildup, and perhaps even to affect the outcome of the war.

It was a spectacular failure. Within the month the operatives were arrested, along with the members of another team of four, who had landed in Florida four days later, under similar circumstances. Neither team had managed even to attempt an act of sabotage.

President Franklin Roosevelt, newly engaged in the war against Germany and eager to demonstrate successes, demanded that justice be swift and severe. To that end he ordered the creation of a military tribunal, using as precedents obscure cases from the Civil and Revolutionary Wars. Within a month all eight men had been sentenced to death and six had been executed. The other two, who had turned in their colleagues and cooperated with the U.S. government, had their sentences reduced—one to life in prison, the other to thirty years. Transcripts of the tribunal's proceedings, on which this article is based, ran to some 3,000 pages and were kept secret for eighteen years after the trial; a copy sits in the "Map Room files" at the Roosevelt Presidential Library, in Hyde Park, New York. Prior to the tribunal the FBI interviewed all eight of the would-be saboteurs, who provided details about their training in Germany, their arrival in the United States, and their capture. Transcripts of those interviews, on which

this article also relies, can be found in Justice Department files at the National Archives.

This episode, though minor in the overall context of the war, is nevertheless of renewed interest today. The military tribunals proposed by the Bush Administration in the wake of the September 11 attacks rely on the case of the captured Germans for precedent.

THE RECRUITS

The idea of sending saboteurs to the United States was the brainchild of Walter Kappe, a high-ranking Nazi official who had immigrated to America from Germany in 1925. Kappe took a job at a farm-implement factory in Kankakee, Illinois; he later moved to Chicago, to write for a German-language newspaper, and by 1933 he had moved to New York and become a leader in the Friends of Hitler movement there. In 1937 he returned to Germany to serve in the Third Reich's propaganda office, where he spent the next four years giving pep talks to repatriated Germans like himself. By late 1941 Kappe had been transferred to German military intelligence, known as the Abwehr, where he was assigned to identify and train men for a sabotage campaign in America.

The Abwehr had studied U.S. military production and key transportation lines in great detail, and Kappe made use of this intelligence in his planning. To cripple the light-metals industry, critical in airplane manufacturing, he and the Abwehr targeted plants operated by the Aluminum Company of America in Alcoa, Tennessee; Massena, New York; and East St. Louis, Illinois. To disrupt the supply of important raw materials for aluminum production, they targeted the Philadelphia Salt Company's cryolite plant. They developed plans to sabotage certain U.S. waterways—focusing particularly on the Ohio River locks between Cincinnati and St. Louis—and the hydro-electric power plants at Niagara Falls and in the Tennessee Valley. They also wanted to mangle the Horse-

WANTED

GERMAN SABOTEUR

Photo taken February 19, 1935



WALTER KAPPE, alias Walter Kappel

F.B.I. 16 M 50 W 001
M 9 W 111



Walter Kappe is known to be connected with sabotage activities being promoted by the Nazi Government. He was born January 12, 1905 at Alfeld, Leina, Germany, and entered the United States on March 9, 1925. He filed application for United States citizenship at Kenosha, Illinois, in June, 1935. He is known to be a member of the German Literary Club, Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Teutonic Club, Chicago, Illinois. Kappe was an agent in the United States for the Ausland Organization and editor "Deutscher Wacker" und Beobachter", official organ of the German-American Bund. Kappe left the United States in 1937 and may return to the United States as an agent for Germany. This individual is described as follows:

DESCRIPTION

Name	Walter Kappe	Hair	Blond
Alias	Walter Kappel	Complexion	Fair
Age	30	Occupation	Editor
Date of Birth	January 12, 1905	Former residence	49 East 83rd Street, New York City
Place of Birth	Alfeld, Leina, Germany	Marital status	Married
Height	5'10"	Relatives	Wife, Hilda Kappe, formerly of Chicago, Ill.
Weight	250		
Build	Stocky		
Eyes	Grey		

If you are in possession of any information concerning the whereabouts of Walter Kappe, alias Walter Kappel, communicate immediately in person or by telephone or telegraph "collect" to the undersigned or to the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, the local address and telephone numbers of which are set forth on the reverse side of this notice.

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER, DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
TELEPHONE NATIONAL 7417

July 26, 1942

Walter Kappe, the Nazi agent who ran Operation Pastorius

shoe Curve, an important railroad site in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and the Hell Gate Bridge, which connected the rail lines of New England with New York City. They had designs on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, one of America's major coal carriers. They planned to bomb Jewish-owned department stores for general terror-inducing effect.

Kappe code-named his mission Operation Pastorius, after Franz Daniel Pastorius, the leader of the first group of Germans to settle in Colonial America, in Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683. Kappe imagined that he would ultimately return to Chicago as the mastermind of the operation. He had plans that a U-boat with German saboteurs would arrive in the United States every six weeks until the war was won.

There was no shortage of candidates for Kappe's initial crew of operatives. The Nazis had recently repatriated thousands of Germans living in the United States by offering them one-way tickets home. But his requirements were exacting: he wanted men who spoke English, were familiar with the United States, and were skilled in a trade that could provide them with cover while they lived in America. That proved difficult.

George John Dasch was Kappe's first recruit. He had gone to America in October of 1922, as a stowaway on the

S.S. *Schoharie*, and had been a dishwasher and a waiter in Manhattan and on Long Island. In August of 1926 he was arrested twice, for operating a brothel and for violating Prohibition laws. While working in a hotel he met and married an American. Later he spent time in Chicago selling sanctuary supplies for the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy before returning to waiting tables. Although he completed the requirements for U.S. citizenship in 1939, he never showed up in court to be sworn in.

In 1941 Dasch returned to Berlin, where the Nazi bureaucracy required that he fill out forms explaining the reason for his return to Germany. Dasch wrote that he intended "to partake in political life." This led to his being questioned further by a Gestapo agent, to whom he said, "Even if I have to work as a street cleaner and do my job cleaning streets right, I want to participate politically." His motives may have been more complicated, however: he was not, one of his fellows later observed, "the absolute Nazi he pretended to be." After his capture by the FBI, Dasch claimed that he had joined the sabotage mission in order to learn secrets that he could later use in the United States to fight against the Nazis.

On June 3, 1941, Dasch met Kappe, who cross-examined him about his life in the United States. When Dasch said he wanted to join the German army, Kappe said he believed that Dasch might serve the Third Reich to far better advantage in another, unspecified capacity. Kappe subsequently hired Dasch to monitor U.S. radio broadcasts in a listening station where fifty-three languages were spoken and where the news that was gathered was teletyped to all the members of the German cabinet.

In November, Kappe called on Dasch again and asked him if he would like to return to America, to help realize "the plan on which my office has been working for a long time." Dasch demurred, saying, "But that's a peaceful country, isn't it?" Kappe admitted that the United States was indeed neutral, but he characterized it as an indirect enemy, because it was a supplier and a supporter of Germany's enemies. "Therefore," he said, "it is time to attack them. We wish to attack the American industries by industrial sabotage." By mid-January of 1942 Dasch had been assigned permanently to the planning of the U.S. mission.

On March 1 Dasch reported to a secret office of the Abwehr to review the personal histories of several other men whom Kappe had tentatively selected to make up two teams of saboteurs, one of which Dasch would lead. In a series of interviews Dasch identified and eliminated a number of what he called "nitwits," along with others who seemed interested simply in escaping Germany at any cost. In the end he selected the following men, who, if not "nitwits," were also not exactly the Nazi elite.

- Ernest Peter Burger, born in 1906, joined the Nazi Party at the age of seventeen. He immigrated to America in 1927 to work as a machinist in Milwaukee and Detroit. He became a U.S. citizen in February of 1933, but when he couldn't

find work during the Depression, he returned to Germany. There he rejoined the Nazi Party and became an aide-de-camp to Ernest Roehm, the chief of the Nazi storm troopers. He went on to study at the University of Berlin, and he later wrote a paper critical of the Gestapo—a move that earned him seventeen months in a concentration camp. Upon his release from the camp, in July of 1941, Burger served as a private in the German army, guarding Yugoslav and British prisoners of war. The following February he appeared on a list of Germans who had lived in America, and soon after he was interviewed and—somewhat oddly, given his history—selected to attend sabotage school.

- Herbert Haupt, born in 1919, was the youngest of the recruits. He had also spent the most time in America, having moved to Chicago with his family when he was six years old. Haupt attended Chicago's Lane Technical High School and served in the German-American Bund's Junior League, but he fled to Mexico in June of 1941. The German consul in Mexico City gave him money and

arranged for his passage to Japan; Haupt took a Japanese freighter to Yokohama, where he later boarded a German steamer that broke through the British naval blockade of Germany and landed him in Bordeaux 107 days later. He received the Iron Cross, second class, for sighting an enemy steamer while on lookout.

- Heinrich Heinck, born in 1907, entered the United States illegally in 1926. After working in New York City as a busboy, a handyman, an elevator operator, and a machinist, he leaped at the German government's return offer in 1939. He had a limited command of English and spoke with a thick German accent. The other recruits considered Heinck phlegmatic and unsure of himself.
- Edward Kerling, born in 1909, was among the first 80,000 men to join the Nazi Party. He joined at the age of nineteen and maintained his membership after moving to America, in 1928. After a stint smoking hams for a Brooklyn meat-packing company, Kerling found work as a chauffeur and handyman in Mount Kisco, New York, and Greenwich,



Connecticut. In 1940 he returned to Germany, where he ran the propaganda shows in movie theaters. With his puffy cheeks, heavy jaw, and dimpled chin, Kerling was, Burger thought, a “decidedly Irish type.” He was chosen to lead the second team.

- Herman Neubauer, born in 1910, went to America in 1931; he worked as a cook in restaurants, on ships, and at the Chicago World’s Fair, in 1933. In 1939 he moved to Miami, but in 1940, while visiting his family in Germany, he was drafted into the German army and sent to the Russian front, where he was wounded in the face and the leg by shrapnel. While recovering in an army medical center in Vienna, he received a note from Kappe inquiring whether he would “like to go on a special assignment to a country where you have been before.”
- Richard Quirin, born in 1908, moved to the United States in 1927. He worked in maintenance at a General Electric plant in Schenectady, New York, but was laid off during the Depression. He then moved to New York City, where

he joined the Friends of the New Germany and found work as a housepainter. He, too, returned to Germany in the repatriation program.

- Werner Thiel, born in 1907, traveled to America in 1927 to work as a machinist at a Ford plant in Detroit. He later moved to New York, where he took a job as a porter in a senior citizens’ home. He subsequently moved to Hammond, Indiana, before taking various jobs in Illinois, California, and Florida. In 1939 Thiel returned to Germany in the repatriation program.

LIFE ON THE FARM

In April, Kappe and his recruits were dispatched to a farm in Brandenburg, forty miles west of Berlin. From the road all that was visible of the farm, formerly the home of a wealthy Jewish shoe manufacturer, was a large stone farmhouse and a few pigs and cows roaming the grounds. But back behind a stone wall armed guards and German shepherds were on patrol twenty-four hours a day.



In the fields behind the farmhouse members of the Abwehr constructed sections of railroad track and bridges of various kinds and lengths. They also set up pistol and rifle ranges, a field for hand-grenade practice, and a gymnasium for boxing and judo training. Classrooms and laboratories were situated above the garage, and a nearby greenhouse supplied fresh fruit, vegetables, and—incongruously, given the circumstances—flowers.

On their first day at the farm Kappe told the men that they were about to begin training for an important battle against U.S. production and manufacturing. Their training, he said, would include courses in the construction and use of explosives, primers, fuses, and timers, and in the workings and vulnerabilities of industrial plants, railroads, bridges, and canal locks. The men would also be given plausible new identities for use in the United States.

The recruits settled into a routine of classroom time, private study, practical training, and exercise. They began each day with calisthenics, attended lectures in the morning and the afternoon, and had regular breaks from the classroom for sports. They took walks in the countryside, during which they sang “The Star Spangled Banner” and “Oh, Susanna!” At meals and after hours they were required to read recently published American newspapers and magazines. In pairs they practiced blowing up the railroad tracks laid around the estate, determining by trial and error the exact amount of explosives required in a given situation. Occasionally their instructors tested their vigilance and their reactions by launching surprise attacks on them.

In the classroom the men were forbidden to take notes and were required instead to commit everything to memory. Using detailed photographs, plans, and drawings, their instructors discussed the major terminals of the U.S. railroad system, the various engines used, and average freight-train speeds. The men were briefed on railroad bottlenecks where sabotage would inflict the greatest disruption.

The primary objective of the missions, Kappe told his men, was simply to do enough harm to impede production. He warned them not to try to blow up large dams or iron bridges or bridges with girders—such jobs were too difficult for a small team to carry out. They should also avoid targeting passenger trains. The Abwehr wanted to minimize civilian casualties.

Kappe told his men that when they arrived in the United States, their first task would be to create suitable cover for themselves. He provided them with forged Social Security and Selective Service registration cards. Dasch and Kerling became George John Davis and Edward Kelly, respectively—both born in San Francisco before the 1906 earthquake and fire, which meant that no one could demand records to corroborate their papers. Thiel became John Thomas, and was identified as a Polish immigrant in order to explain his accent, which was heavy. Heinck became Henry Kayner, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (a town name he was con-

sistently unable to spell). Richard Quirin became Richard Quintas; Herman Neubauer became Henry Nicholas. Haupt kept his own identity, as did Burger. (Both had American citizenship.) Because Burger had worked as a commercial artist, Kappe developed the idea that Burger should move to Chicago, set up an art studio, and insert an ad for his services in the *Chicago Tribune* on the first and the fifteenth of each month—a plan that would give Burger visibility and credibility and would also provide all the men involved in the mission with an easy way to find him.

Kappe also made the men sign contracts obliging them to remain silent about their mission throughout their lives, on penalty of death, and stating that if they died during the mission, their wives would receive lump sums determined by the German government. Should their efforts prove successful, they would be given good jobs following the war. Kappe told them that they would be under constant observation in the United States by German intelligence—which, he claimed, had infiltrated the FBI.

On April 30, the last day of class, Kappe gave special instructions to Dasch and Kerling. Each was to lead three other men. The teams were to travel across the Atlantic by U-boat and land secretly in separate locations, carrying with them crates of explosives and other tools for sabotage. Dasch and Kerling would each be given \$50,000 in cash for bribes and expenses, and their men would be given \$9,000 apiece. Dasch and Kerling received white handkerchiefs that, when permeated with fumes from a bottle of ammonia, would reveal a message stating how to reach Kappe and several U.S.-based contacts. Kappe emphasized that the two men were to focus initially on establishing cover and to refrain from any sabotage activities whatsoever. Detailed instructions would come at noon on July 4, at the Hotel Gibson in Cincinnati.

Almost a month later, after his men had had a few weeks of leave, Kappe gathered them together in Lorient, France, where the Germans based some of their U-boats, and gave them their final orders. Kerling, Neubauer, Haupt, and Thiel would depart for Florida on May 26; Dasch, Burger, Heinck, and Quirin would depart for New York on May 28.

FIRST CONTACT

On May 28 Dasch and his team boarded submarine U-202. Captain Hans-Heinz Lindner announced over the loudspeaker that the four men were on special assignment to America, and called on every crew member to treat them well and ask no questions. The sub carried forty men, fourteen torpedoes, a cannon, and an anti-aircraft gun. As the vessel approached the Long Island coast, on June 12, the captain switched from diesel to silent electric motors. Just before midnight the men heard a scraping sound: the sub had touched the ocean floor some fifty yards from shore.

Dasch and his team, accompanied by members of the

U-boat's crew, were loaded into an inflatable rowboat along with four wooden crates full of explosives and supplies, and a giant canvas seabag containing civilian clothes and other gear. The men were dressed in German military uniforms; if they were apprehended immediately, they would become prisoners of war. Lindner ordered Dasch to subdue by violence any civilian or soldier who challenged his team, and to send the person back in the rowboat so that the sub's crew could "take care of him."

"It was a pitch-dark, foggy night, made to order for landing," Dasch later recalled. The fog was so thick that the men could see barely fifty feet ahead. After rowing in circles for a time, the group finally made a landing, and Dasch quickly sought higher ground to survey his surroundings. To his horror, he saw beacons both left and right. Running back to the boat, he ordered his men to put on their civilian clothes. As soon as they had changed, Quirin and Heinck began burying the explosives in some high dunes. Burger, however, seemed already to be entertaining thoughts of betraying the mission. Out of sight of the others he placed an empty German cigarette tin in the sand, where it could later be easily discovered by a passing patrol. Farther up the beach he left a small schnapps bottle, some socks, a vest, and a bathing suit for good measure.

AFTER LANDING ON THE BEACH THE GERMANS PROCEEDED INLAND, ALMOST CRAWLING, FOR HALF A MILE. THEY FOUND A ROAD. WHENEVER A CAR PASSED, THEY DOVE INTO THE BUSHES. ONE OF THE MEN, SHIVERING LIKE A DOG, SAID OVER AND OVER, "WE'RE SURROUNDED, BOYS!"

Also on the beach that night, on a six-mile foot patrol, was Coast Guardsman John Cullen, of Bayside, Queens, a twenty-one-year-old former Macy's deliveryman who enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1940 and later became a "sand pounder," to keep watch at night for suspicious activity close to shore. For weeks on end Cullen had patrolled, unarmed, without ever encountering another person. But at about 12:30 that morning, through the fog, he saw a dark object in the water some twenty feet away, and three men standing nearby. "I thought they were fishermen, local residents," he recollected recently, at his home in Chesapeake, Virginia, "until I saw one of the guys dragging a seabag into the dunes and then speaking in German."

"What are you doing down here?" Cullen asked. "Who are you?"

"We're a couple of fishermen from Southampton who have run ashore," Dasch answered. "We will stay here until sunrise and we will be all right."

Cullen told them that sunrise was hours away and said that there was no reason Dasch couldn't come with him to the Coast Guard station until then. Dasch, concerned that the seabag might raise Cullen's suspicions, decided to pretend to go along with him. In the meantime, one of the Germans came running down the beach with the seabag and addressed

Dasch in German. Dasch hollered, "You damn fool, why don't you go back to the other guys?" He then took Cullen's arm and asked menacingly how old he was, and if he had a father and a mother. Cullen said he did.

"Well," Dasch said, "I wouldn't want to have to kill you. Forget about this and I will give you some money and you can have a good time." He offered Cullen \$100, which Cullen refused. Dasch then offered \$300, and Cullen accepted. "I was afraid they were going to knock me off right there," Cullen later said. "But when he offered me the money, I knew that was a little encouragement."

Dasch took off his hat and shined a flashlight into his own face. "Take a good look at me," he said to Cullen. "Look in my eyes. You will hear from me in Washington." Dasch then turned around and joined his colleagues, and Cullen began walking cautiously backward before turning and racing toward the station, in the town of Amagansett.

Burger told the others that Dasch had been talking to an American sailor. The men were concerned, but Dasch said to them, "Now, boys, this is the time to be quiet and hold your nerves. Each of you get a box and follow me." Burger dragged the seabag, deliberately leaving a track that could be identified later, and then helped the others bury it, along with their army uniforms.

The team proceeded inland, almost crawling, for half a mile. They lay still in the dunes for an hour and then began walking until they found a road. Whenever a car passed, they dove into nearby bushes. Heinck, shivering like a dog, said over and over, "We're surrounded, boys!" Eventually, at just after five in the morning, they stumbled into the tiny train station in Amagansett. They were wet, grass-stained, and generally filthy.

When the station opened for business, at six-thirty, Dasch bought four tickets to Manhattan. "Fishing in this neighborhood has been pretty bad lately," he observed at the ticket window, in a feeble attempt at nonchalance. Not long after, he and his men boarded their train.

DOUBTS AND BETRAYAL

After moving out of sight of Dasch and his men, Cullen raced to the Coast Guard station and sounded the alarm. He and other officers quickly formed a search party and returned to the site of the encounter. "While I was standing there," Cullen recollected recently, "I saw the light from the sub. I could also smell diesel oil. I knew it had to be a sub, so we notified the main Coast Guard station at Napeague. The sub was stuck on a sandbar, and when they revved the engines, the ground where I was

standing shook. We didn't know at the time whether the Germans were coming in or leaving."

At daybreak they found the cigarette tin and the bathing suit. After following the trail left by the seabag, a member of the search party poked a stick in the sand and struck something hard. The men dug the four crates of explosives out of the sand. Other members of the party followed footprints and soon found the buried German clothing, including a cap with a swastika sewn on it.

Sensing the gravity of what had been found, Coast Guard intelligence officers came and immediately took it all to Governor's Island, near Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty, where, at the area Coast Guard headquarters, they opened three of the crates. The fourth, hissing because the TNT inside had been exposed to salt water, was moved to the end of a dock and carefully opened there. At 11:00 A.M. the FBI was notified of the find, and by noon everything the Germans had brought with them, with the exception of their money and the clothes on their backs, had been impounded by the Bureau. Tension remained high, however: no one knew how many men had landed or what their plans were.

In Washington, J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, breathlessly informed Attorney General Francis Biddle of

vantage of their situation by shopping, carousing in clubs, and seeking out prostitutes. Dasch later wrote, "There was nothing in the way of Nazi surveillance to prevent me from taking [all of the money] I'd been provided with and fading into a happy and luxurious obscurity."

But he didn't. Dasch and Burger began to have frank discussions about their mission and their motivations. Dasch admitted to Burger that he felt he didn't belong in Germany, and that he had in fact begun planning an escape back to America even as he had worked for Germany's propaganda division. Burger, for his part, talked of his troubles with the Gestapo. Dasch then told Burger that he "was not George John Davis, the group leader of a gang of saboteurs, but George John Dasch, the man who came here into this country for the opportunity to fight Hitler and his gang in my own fashion." Upon hearing this, Burger, according to Dasch, "broke out in a crying spell" and confessed to having left a trail of evidence on the beach, adding that he believed the crates of explosives must have been discovered by that time. The mission seemed botched before it had even begun.

Dasch told Burger it was critical that Dasch contact the FBI, because, he said, should any of the seven men—or even Dasch himself—fall into police hands, "it would be very difficult for me to prove the real reason I came

THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL DELIBERATED FOR TWO DAYS BEFORE FINDING ALL EIGHT MEN GUILTY. ROOSEVELT'S INSTRUCTIONS: SIX OF THE EIGHT WERE TO BE ELECTROCUTED THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE OTHER TWO, WHO HAD TURNED THEIR COLLEAGUES IN, GOT PRISON SENTENCES.

the news of the moment. Biddle later wrote, "All of Edgar Hoover's imaginative and restless energy was stirred into prompt and effective action. His eyes were bright, his jaw set, excitement flickering around the edge of his nostrils. He was determined to catch them all before any sabotage took place." The FBI worked with the Coast Guard to set up continuous surveillance of the area where the materials had been buried, hoping to apprehend the men when they returned for their stash. The Bureau commandeered a private bungalow on the beach and began interviewing local residents who fit the descriptions given by Cullen. Hoover also imposed a news blackout on the story.

Meanwhile, Dasch and his team had arrived at Jamaica Station in New York, at about 9:30 A.M., and had immediately bought themselves new sets of clothes. After changing in the men's room at a restaurant, they threw their old clothes in a trash can and split into two groups, agreeing to meet later. Dasch and Burger registered at the Hotel Governor Clinton—Dasch as George John Davis, and Burger as himself. Heinck and Quirin registered at the Hotel Martinique under their respective aliases. They all ate, washed, and rested.

The men found themselves completely on their own in the city. Free and loaded with money, they took full ad-

here." First, however, Dasch and Burger needed to reassure Heinck and Quirin that all was proceeding according to plan. Burger met Heinck and Quirin several times during the next few days and persuaded the two to remain quiet in New York while Dasch supposedly pursued covert contacts for the team.

On Sunday, June 14, Dasch called the FBI. Agent Dean McWhorter answered, and Dasch introduced himself as Franz Daniel Pastorius, "a German citizen who has arrived in this country only yesterday morning." Dasch told McWhorter that he had information so important to report that "the only person who should hear it is J. Edgar Hoover." McWhorter suggested that Dasch come to his office, but Dasch mildly replied, "I, Franz Daniel Pastorius, shall try to get in contact with your Washington office either Thursday or Friday, and you should notify them of this fact." McWhorter indeed made note of the call, but rather than sending a message to Washington, merely wrote, "This memo is being prepared only for the purpose of recording the call made by [Pastorius]."

On the morning of June 18 Dasch packed for Washington. He divided the money Kappe had given him into several envelopes bound together with a rubber band and attached a note that said, in part, "Money from German [government]

for their purpose, but to be used to fight the Nazis. George J. Dasch, alias George J. Davis, alias Franz Pastorius." He paid his and Burger's hotel bills and left Burger a note.

Dear Pete:

Sorry for not having been able to see you before I left. I came to the realization to go to Washington and finish that which we have started so far.

I'm leaving you, believing that you take good care of yourself and also of the other boys. You may rest assured, that I shall try to straighten everything out to the very best possibility. My bag and clothes I'll put in your room. Your hotel bill is paid by me, including this day. If anything extraordinary should happen, I'll get in touch with you directly.

Until later,

I'm your sincere friend,

George.

Dasch arrived in Washington late Thursday and checked into the Mayflower Hotel. After breakfast the following morning he phoned the Information Service of the U.S. government and asked the young woman who answered to explain the difference between the FBI and the Secret Service. "She asked me what the purpose of my visit was," he later recalled, "and I told her that I had to make a statement of military as well as of political value." Directed to phone the FBI, Dasch ended up speaking to Agent Duane Traynor, who listened politely as Dasch identified himself as George John Dasch, the leader of a team of eight saboteurs who had just arrived from Germany. Traynor told him to remain in his room so that FBI agents could escort him to the Justice Department.

Dasch spoke with FBI special agents over the next five days. He told them he wanted to lead them to each of the seven other men and expressed an interest in "having the opportunity to meet your superior, and Mr. Hoover perhaps?" He told the agents all he knew about Kappe. He discussed his experiences after his return to Germany, his dissatisfaction with the Third Reich, and the circumstances of his amphibious return to the United States, including his encounter with John Cullen. He insisted that he had planned his betrayal long before. "This is an idea," he said, "that is eight months old."

Dasch also insisted that Burger was as staunchly anti-Nazi as he, having joined the mission "as a way to get even." Quirin and Heinck he dismissed as "a couple of Nazis who have only one duty to perform and that is to listen to the command." He said, "They have not to question the sincerity, truthfulness and correctness. Their duty is to follow it, otherwise to die." By the end of the second day of interrogation, working with information provided by Dasch, the FBI had located and apprehended all three members of Dasch's team.

Rounding up the second team, which had landed near Jacksonville, Florida, during the night of June 16, was somewhat more difficult. All Dasch knew was that the two teams were to meet in Cincinnati on July 4, but he offered up the white handkerchief as a potential lead. At first he

could not remember how to handle the invisible ink, but the FBI lab "broke the hankie," and agents were dispatched to shadow the contacts named on it. Within days the FBI had found all four members of Kerling's team, in New York and Chicago, and had them in custody.

Only after all the other men had been jailed, in New York, did the FBI officially arrest Dasch, on July 3. During his interrogation, Dasch later said, the FBI had told him to plead guilty and not to mention his betrayal—just to put on "the biggest act in the world" and "take the punishment," for which, after a few months in prison, he would receive a presidential pardon. After his arrest Dasch begged to be jailed with his colleagues, so that they would not suspect he had turned them in. The FBI obliged. Dasch was walked past the cells of his colleagues and then placed in his own cell. He was under the impression that his new friends at the FBI would soon come to release him. But not long after he arrived, he looked out the peephole of his cell and saw a guard reading the New York *Daily News*: Dasch's picture was on the front page, accompanied by the headline "CAPTURED NAZI SPY."

So it was that two weeks after the Long Island landing, all eight Germans found themselves in custody without having even tried to commit a single act of sabotage. Dasch consoled himself by remembering the FBI's promise of a presidential pardon.

HOMELAND DEFENSE

When the men had all been apprehended, Attorney General Biddle telephoned President Roosevelt with the good news. Roosevelt was determined that punishment be harsh, to discourage future infiltrations. In a memorandum to Biddle, Roosevelt wrote that the two American citizens among the eight were guilty of high treason and the other six were spies. All, he felt, deserved the death penalty. "I want one thing clearly understood, Francis," he told Biddle. "I won't hand them over to any United States Marshal armed with a writ of habeas corpus."

Meanwhile, Hoover and his aides at the FBI had decided that when the story was made public, Dasch's surrender and his and Burger's cooperation would go unmentioned, so as to give the German government the impression that the U.S. authorities were so efficient and so well informed that additional landings would be a waste of time and manpower.

With the approval of the President and the Attorney General, Hoover broke the story at a press conference on June 27, making headlines nationwide the following day. "FBI CAPTURES 8 SABOTEURS" read the front page of *The New York Times*. The story itself, however, was remarkably light on the details of the men's capture. When pressed on how the FBI had broken the case, Hoover was quick and succinct. "That," he said, "will have to wait until after the war." Hoover did, however, reveal exactly which aluminum plants and railway bridges had been targeted, how much

explosive material had been found on the beaches, and the fact that two of the men were American citizens.

Immediately after the arrests the FBI swung into action. Agents swarmed over the Swedish liner *Drottningholm*, for example, in search of German spies masquerading as refugees. They subjected the baggage and the mail of all 868 *Drottningholm* passengers to two days of intensive investigation—the most rigorous examination ever of a vessel docked in the Port of New York up to then. They questioned some 250 “enemy” aliens in Altoona, and seized many “powerful short-wave radio transmitters.” When asked if these efforts were in any way connected to the eight Germans, the head of the FBI’s Philadelphia field office responded, “Draw your own conclusions.”

The public vilified the would-be saboteurs. *Life* magazine published FBI mug shots of the men, photographs of

three years. He dredged up a seventy-six-year-old precedent, dating from the Civil War and involving Lambdin Milligan, a resident of Indiana and an outspoken opponent of Abraham Lincoln’s. Milligan had been charged with giving aid to and communicating with the enemy and violating the laws of war. He had been tried by a military commission and sentenced to death. The Supreme Court heard the case and unanimously granted him a writ of habeas corpus, citing a citizen’s right to a trial in civil court unless “ordinary law no longer adequately secures public safety and private rights.”

On July 2, less than a week after the men had been captured, Roosevelt issued a proclamation to the nation.

Whereas the safety of the United States demands that all enemies who have entered upon the territory of the United States as part of an invasion or predatory incursion ...

should be promptly tried in accordance with the Law of War; now, therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, ... do hereby proclaim that all persons who are subjects, citizens or residents of any nation at war with the United States or who give obedience to or act under the direction of any such nation, and who during time of war enter or attempt to enter the United States or any territory or possession thereof, through coastal or boundary defenses, and are charged with committing or attempting or preparing to commit sabotage, espionage, hostile or warlike acts, or violations of the law of war, shall be subject to the law of war and to the jurisdiction of military tribunals; and that such persons shall not be privileged to seek any remedy or maintain any proceeding, directly or indirectly, or to have any such remedy or proceeding sought on their behalf, in the courts of the United States.



The military tribunal in session, with seized evidence in the foreground

some of their equipment, and display type reading “THE EIGHT NAZI SABOTEURS SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH.” When the *South Bend* (Indiana) *Tribune* polled its readers on July 2, only one respondent wanted them set free. An overwhelming majority—1,097 people—were in favor of immediate execution. One reader went so far as to suggest that the men be fed to Gargantua, a giant circus gorilla—and enclosed money for Gargantua’s funeral, writing that the gorilla would “surely ... die of such poisonous eating.”

On June 30 Biddle informed the President that a military tribunal would be preferable to a civil trial for handling the case, because it would be quick and secret and because the death penalty could be imposed with only a two-thirds majority among the judges. Biddle also feared that if the eight defendants were tried in a civil court, the jury might find that no sabotage had been committed, and the men might therefore receive sentences of only two or

The wording of the proclamation was broad enough to cover almost any remotely similar future offense.

Major General Frank R. McCoy was chosen to preside over the tribunal (it was never to be called a court) that was hastily convened to handle the case. Three other major generals and three brigadier generals completed the commission. Attorney General Biddle was assigned to lead the prosecution, assisted by Major General Myron Cramer, the Army’s judge advocate general. Brigadier General Albert L. Cox was the tribunal’s provost marshal. Among the many lawyers working for Biddle was Lloyd Cutler, who went on to become the White House counsel to Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton—and who has now been consulted by the Bush Administration as it attempts to set up military tribunals.

Colonel Cassius M. Dowell and Colonel Kenneth C. Royall were ordered to serve as defense lawyers. Dowell, a forty-year Army veteran who had been wounded in World

War I, handled a number of legal issues for the Army. Royall, a trial lawyer from North Carolina with a degree from Harvard Law School, had recently been appointed by Army Secretary Henry L. Stimson to head the Army's legal division in charge of military contracts. The two men came to the conclusion that it was best for their case if Dasch was defended separately, so Colonel Carl Ristine, of the Army Inspector General's Office, was appointed counsel for Dasch.

The votes of five of the commission's seven members were required for conviction and sentencing. As Commander in Chief, the President would be the final arbiter of all commission recommendations. There would be no appeal.

A MILITARY TRIBUNAL

On July 4 the eight Germans were moved in secret from New York to Washington, where they were incarcerated in the District of Columbia Jail. Each man was isolated in a tiled cell, with an empty cell on either side of him, and was under surveillance around the clock. Clad only in pajamas and paper slippers, the prisoners were denied writing materials. They were allowed to read old magazines and newspapers and to smoke cigarettes lit for them by their guards. Current newspapers were forbidden, so that the prisoners could not learn of their fate. No man was allowed to talk to any other. They were given only paper spoons and paper plates with which to eat their meals—there was to be no opportunity for suicide. The men never asked to see clergymen or relatives.

Room 5235 of the main Department of Justice building was ordinarily used by the FBI for lectures and films. On July 8, however, it became a military courtroom, its windows covered with heavy black curtains that blocked all daylight. At the front of the room that day, as the tribunal began, long tables were placed end to end to serve as the bench for the seven judges. To the left of the bench stood a witness chair, a small table for the court reporter, and tables for the prosecution and the defense. Behind the table for the defense sat all eight defendants, in alphabetical order, dressed in the clothing—suits and two-toned shoes—that they had bought during their brief time at large in the United States. Each man was flanked by guards. At the rear of the room were the buried clothing, the explosives, and the crates, all of which were to be entered as evidence.

Each day of the trial the prisoners were transported from the jail to the Justice Department and back, in two armored black vans. FBI agents led the procession, and nine police officers on motorcycles followed alongside. Behind the prisoners' vans were three Army scout cars with soldiers and machine guns at the ready. Each of the nineteen days

that the men were summoned before the tribunal, the motorcade took a different, circuitous route to the Justice Department, where fifty soldiers stood guard outside the entrance. Hot-dog and ice-cream vendors set up stands to feed the curious.

Colonel Royall opened his defense with a statement to the tribunal. "In deference to the commission," he said, "and in order that we may not waive for our clients any rights which may belong to them, we desire to state that, in our opinion, the order of the President of the United States creating this court is invalid and unconstitutional ... Our view is based first on the fact that the civil courts are open in the territory in which we are now located and that, in our opinion, there are civil statutes governing the matters to be investigated."

Biddle was no less tough in his response: "This is not a trial of offenses of law of the civil courts, but is a trial of the



FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (center), following the tribunal proceedings

offenses of the law of war, which is not cognizable by the civil courts. It is the trial, as alleged in the charges, of certain enemies who crossed our borders ... and who crossed in disguise and landed here ... They are exactly and precisely in the same position as armed forces invading this country."

Royall argued that the articles of war cited in the charges applied solely to U.S. citizens caught aiding an enemy, and not to enemies themselves. He further contended that no evidence suggested that the men would have followed through with their plans for sabotage. They had not been trained for espionage, had only vague contacts through which to communicate with Germany, and had no plans to return home until after the war. In response Biddle cited the case of Major John André, the British officer executed during the Revolutionary War for passing through American lines with the intention of bribing an American officer.

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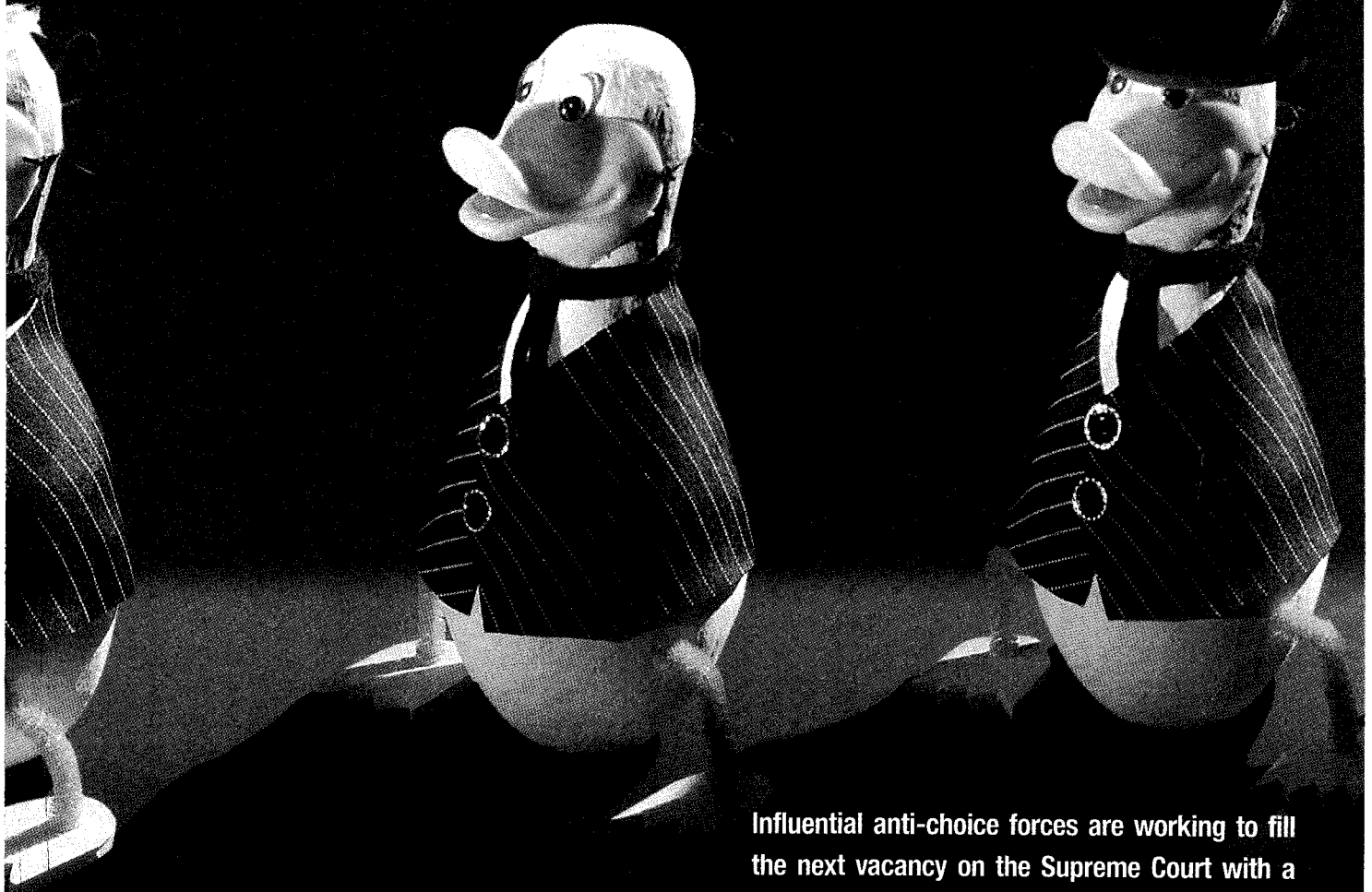
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Lloyd Cutler remembers the opening arguments as a harbinger of what was to come. "Royall stood up and made an objection—a perfectly good one. The president of the court banged his gavel and said, 'The court will rise.' Forty-five minutes later the court came back and said 'Objection overruled.' Then Biddle asked a second question, and the same thing happened. The court took another forty-five-minute break and overruled the objection. Royall got the message."

Coast Guardsman John Cullen was the first witness. After recalling the events of his encounter with the Germans, Cullen said he could identify Dasch only if allowed to hear his voice. When Dasch said, "What is your name?" Cullen positively identified him. In his cross-examination of Cullen, Colonel Ristine noted that Dasch had never attempted any violence against Cullen. After Cullen left the

chance to go through with our orders." Quirin claimed to have developed doubts about the mission "on the submarine." Thiel claimed that he would never have carried out acts of sabotage. During the trial, under interrogation by Biddle, Thiel and Neubauer claimed that they hadn't turned themselves in to the FBI for fear of the alleged Gestapo infiltration, which would have resulted in dire harm to their families in Germany. Heinck admitted that even before going to the training farm he had understood that the work he was about to do in America was definitely sabotage.

Meanwhile, the question of Dasch's and Burger's special status as collaborators with the U.S. government was also being discussed outside the tribunal. On July 16 Biddle wrote in a memorandum to Roosevelt,

Dasch and Burger were helpful in apprehending the others and in making out the proof. However, up to now, they have refused to testify. The Judge Advocate General and I intend to ask the Commission to impose the death penalty on them because we think they had some intention to go through with their plans when they landed and are therefore legally guilty. If the Commission sentences all eight to death, we will probably be prepared to recommend that you grant some clemency to Dasch and Burger. At the very least, however, they should be detained à la Rudolph Hess until after the war. Burger wants no publicity if he receives clemency. He prefers death to endangering his family. Dasch, however, seems to prefer the publicity, and it might be useful to make him somewhat of a hero, thus encouraging other German agents to turn in their fellows.

Dasch and Burger finally did testify. Dasch claimed that the sole reason he had entered sabotage school was to escape Germany, and Ristine again pointed out Dasch's failure to harm Cullen, despite the orders he was under to subdue and take back to the

submarine anybody he encountered. Burger was the last to testify; he said that he was an American citizen who had served in two National Guard units, earning two honorable discharges. After his return to Germany, he said, he quickly became disillusioned with the Nazi Party and began to plot a return to the United States. The lawyers defending him pointed out that he had cooperated with the FBI agents when they came to his hotel room, and that his interrogation had actually been more useful than Dasch's, with far more detailed descriptions of the school for saboteurs and of his colleagues.

After sixteen days in session the defense rested on July 27, and the six men other than Dasch and Burger signed a statement expressing appreciation for having been given a fair trial. In it they wrote, "Before all we want to state that defense counsel has represented our case unbiased, better than we could expect and probably



Herbert Haupt, one of the would-be saboteurs, being led into the courtroom

stand, Warren Barnes, the chief of the Amagansett Coast Guard station, identified all the objects found on the beach, including the clothes Dasch's men had buried. Next an FBI munitions expert testified as to the type of the explosives.

The next two FBI agents to testify seemed to strengthen Dasch's case. Special Agent Charles Lanham stated that Burger had confessed that he and Dasch had never planned to follow through on the sabotage but instead had wanted to fight Hitler. Special Agent Norval Wills testified to the promise of a presidential pardon for Dasch in return for pleading guilty.

Royall later called each of the Germans to testify in his own defense. Haupt testified that he had planned all along not to go through with the sabotage and to turn the others in on July 6, when he would know where they all were. Neubauer swore that he and Kerling had almost immediately come "to the conclusion that we would not have a

risking the indignation of public opinion. We thank our defense counsel.”

But Royall wasn’t finished. Determined to challenge the President’s proclamation that the men should face a military tribunal, he sought to win his clients’ freedom by demanding a writ of habeas corpus. Though the Supreme Court had been adjourned for the summer, it convened in a special session on July 29 to consider the matter.

Royall argued that Long Island and Florida beaches could not be characterized as “zones of military operation.” There had been no combat there, and no plausible threat of invasion. Royall argued that the civil courts were functioning, and under the circumstances they were the appropriate venue for the case to be heard. Biddle argued that the United States and Germany were at war, and cited a law passed by Congress in 1798 that stated, “Whenever there is a declared war, and the President makes public proclamation of the event, all native citizens, denizens or subjects of the hostile nation shall be liable to be apprehended ... as alien enemies.”

On July 31 the Supreme Court unanimously denied Royall’s appeal, writing, “The military commission was lawfully constituted ... petitioners are held in lawful custody for trial before the military commission and have not shown cause for being discharged by writ of habeas corpus.”

The members of the tribunal then deliberated for two days before reaching a verdict. Finally, on August 3, in accordance with instructions, the tribunal’s verdict was delivered—by Army plane—directly to Roosevelt, at Hyde Park, in four thick manila envelopes. It found all eight men guilty and recommended death by electrocution, but added, “In view of the apparent assistance given to the prosecution by defendants Ernest Peter Burger and George John Dasch, the commission unanimously recommends that the sentence of each of these two defendants ... be commuted from death to life imprisonment.”

On August 7 General Cox, the tribunal’s provost marshal, received instructions from President Roosevelt: all but Dasch and Burger were to be electrocuted at noon the following day.

THE END OF THE AFFAIR

Early in the morning of August 8, after the Germans had been fed a breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast at the District of Columbia Jail, General Cox and an Army chaplain entered the cells of the condemned men and informed them of their fate. Each man turned pale and seemed stunned. None said a word. Burger was reading a copy of *The Saturday Evening Post* when Cox and the chaplain entered and told him he had been spared. Burger responded simply “Yes, sir,” and returned to his reading.

As the morning progressed, military officers, Army doctors, the city coroner, and Army ambulances arrived at

the jail. People moved quickly and said little. The mood was somber. Final adjustments were made to the electric chair—a red-oak device situated in a twelve-by-eighteen-foot execution chamber located on the top floor of the jail. Each condemned man would face a glass panel that appeared to him to be opaque, behind which would sit representatives of the tribunal and other officials. The witnesses were to include Major General McCoy, Hoover, and representatives of the War and Justice Departments. In alphabetical order, beginning with Haupt, the condemned men would be walked into the chamber and executed with 4,500 volts of electricity.

The process began at noon. Each execution took no longer than fourteen minutes—the time required to administer the sentence, establish a time of death, remove the corpse, and ventilate the room for the arrival of the next man.

After the final execution the tribunal reported to President Roosevelt that his orders had been carried out. Just before 1:30 P.M. an announcement was made by the White House press secretary, Steve Early, who reported that six executions had taken place. The six bodies were buried in a pauper’s cemetery at Blue Plains, in the District of Columbia, a site adjacent to the Home for the Aged and Infirm and the Industrial Home School for Colored Children. Six wooden headboards—marked simply 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, and 281—identified the graves.

Early also announced that by “unanimous recommendation by the commission concurred in by the Attorney General and the Judge Advocate General of the Army,” the President had commuted the sentences of Dasch and Burger. “The commutation directed by the President in the case of Burger,” Early said, “was to confinement to hard labor for life. In the case of Dasch, the sentence was commuted by the President to the confinement at hard labor for thirty years. The records in all eight cases will be sealed until the end of the war.”

Dasch and Burger spent some six years in U.S. prisons and then were deported to Germany in April of 1948. Burger subsequently disappeared and is rumored to have fled to Spain. In 1959 Dasch published *Eight Spies Against America*, a self-promotional and little-noticed account of the whole affair. He spent his final years working as a travel agent and a tour guide in Germany and enduring regular harassment in the places he lived, because of his role in the betrayal of his colleagues. In 1983 he was tracked down by an American college student named Jonathan Mann, who reported that Dasch “got all teary-eyed talking about how he facilitated the deaths of ‘those boys.’” Late in his life Dasch befriended Charlie Chaplin, who was living in exile in nearby Switzerland, and the two often compared notes on how J. Edgar Hoover had ruined their lives.

Until his death, in 1992, in Germany, Dasch remained hopeful that he would receive the presidential pardon promised to him decades before. It never came. ▀

BEING ABE LINCOLN

*Lincoln's features and clothing are stamped on the American imagination—
and imitated by “Lincoln presenters” nationwide*

JOSHUA WOLF SHENK

Illustration by Steve Brodner

.....

On the porch of the Country Inn & Suites, in Beckley, West Virginia, five men sat in rocking chairs. They were tall men, in black coats and stovepipe hats. They wore beards shaved around the lips. They wore black boots. Gold chains hung from their vest buttons, holding watches tucked into vest pockets. In the lobby were dozens more men like them, on couches, emerging from elevators. One walked from the hotel restaurant carrying a Coke, its red shocking against the sea of antique black. He removed his hat and slipped the receipt for the drink under the elastic band inside.

Last April the Association of Lincoln Presenters held its seventh annual convention, in Beckley. I had heard there would be forty-four Lincolns there, and fifteen Marys. So I flew to Charleston, drove south sixty miles to Beckley, and stood in the lobby of the Country Inn & Suites, gaping at the sight: Black- and gray- and fake-bearded Lincolns, short and tall Lincolns, and a Lincoln in a wheelchair, with an oxygen tank. A man in sunglasses who looked like Elvis Presley dressed for a Lincoln look-alike contest, or vice versa.

“If any personal description of me is thought desirable,” Lincoln wrote in 1859, “it may be said, I am, in height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and gray eyes—no other marks or brands recollected.” About a year later, as the Republican nominee for President, he received a letter from an eleven-year-old girl, Grace Bedell, advising that “if you will let your whiskers grow ... you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin.”

These physical characteristics—plus the black garb, the top hat, and the solemn look—are stamped on the American imagination, partly because Lincoln is such an important figure, partly because the rise of photography coincided with his rise to power. The various images of Lincoln—including those that appear on the penny and the five-dollar bill—are simultaneously familiar and, in a word that Lincoln often used, “strange.” Something about him

beckons others to look harder, to look deeper. Something about him beckons people to do strange things.

I justified my trip to Beckley as research for a book I am writing about Lincoln’s melancholy: I thought I would find out how the presenters handle the subject, what they think about it. But really I went because it seemed a chance to see eccentricity distilled to its essence—a chance to put down my books and dwell, for a weekend, in a house of strangeness.

I had been in the lobby of the Country Inn & Suites for five minutes when Jim Sayre, a veteran presenter from Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, walked over and asked, in a voice of Kentucky lilt and gravel, “Are you a new Lincoln?”

“No, sir,” I said. (You say “sir” to such a man, seven feet tall with his hat on.) I told him that I had come at the last minute, that I was a writer—and then these words just came out: “I didn’t have time to get my outfit together.”

“Well, come on,” Sayre said, and five minutes later I was in his room upstairs, buttoning up his spare white shirt (“Wal-Mart special,” he said), clipping on his spare flat bow tie, and pulling on his spare black trousers. “Always travel with a spare,” he told me, less explaining than advising. I said okay and put on the hat.

For the rest of the weekend I found myself a pupil among masters. The slogan of the ALP is the poet Vachel Lindsay’s line “Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all.” These Lincolns have taken the slogan to heart in the most practical sense.

For instance, they told me that any stovepipe hat will do, but ideally it should be made of beaver for everyday wear—the rain rolls right off—and silk for special occasions. It’s a nice touch to carry papers up there, as Lincoln did. Kids like it when you pull down the hat and put something in it or, better yet, take something out. Kids especially like the Grace Bedell letter, about the whiskers.

Speaking of which, the beard should be thick and full, but not around the mouth. It’s less a beard, really, than two sideburns saying hello at the chin. But, many Lincolns told me, there is good work for beardless Lincolns.



Work—"gigs," the Lincolns sometimes say—isn't hard to come by. Most of these men became Lincolns without even trying. They may have done a favor for a teacher they knew, or played Lincoln in a community-theater production. And then they got asked again, for a parade or a history fair. They grew the beard, or shaved off the moustache that went with a beard they already had. Then they were ready for the big time—an event at the cemetery in Gettysburg, with more than a thousand people waiting to hear the Gettysburg Address. "Parades are the best," Rick Miller, a Lincoln presenter, yoga instructor, and sales manager for a marking-machine manufacturer, told me. "You can really bask in the love. People smile at you—invariably they smile. And they want to talk to you. People want to talk to a President, whether alive or dead. And it's a babe magnet. There were three women at the parade this morning; I could have danced with all of them."

About twenty ALP members do Lincoln full-time, and several are married to full-time Marys. Homer S. Sewell III

has done 2,150 shows in forty-six states in twenty-seven years. He has traveled the country in his Abe-mobile, a thirty-seven-foot Fleetwood Pace Arrow (though he was trying to sell it; he wants to settle back down). Gerald Bestrom used to drive a 1970 Ford RV painted to look like a log cabin. (At the convention it caught on fire. Gerald had a job to get to on the following Monday morning, so he borrowed a state trooper's truck to haul his tower speakers, card table, Styrofoam hats, maul, and broadax. Gerald was planning to buy another used RV and paint it just like the old one. He said the cause of the fire was unknown, and he'd rather not say whom he suspected. When pressed, though, he pointed out that West Virginia is lousy with Confederates.) Max and Donna Daniels, an Abe-and-Mary team from the Chicago area, have been full-time presenters since 1994, when Max got laid off from his job as the assistant chief of maintenance at a bank. "We took that as God's way of saying 'You're ready,'" Donna told me.

Some other things I learned at the convention:

A four-color business card with a picture of you in dress and in pose helps convince folks you're serious. Spot color works all right, and if you need to cut costs, do black-and-white, and glue a penny on.

A tux jacket will do as a coat in a pinch, but make sure to cover the plastic buttons with cloth.

TO AGE

It is time to tell you
what you may have guessed
along the way without
letting it deter you
do you remember how
once you liked to kneel looking
out of the back window
while your father was driving
and the thread then of pleasure
as you watched the world appear
on both sides and from under
you coming together
into place out of nowhere
growing steadily longer
and you would hum to it
not from contentment but
to keep time with no time
floating out along it
seeing the world grow
smaller as it went from you
farther becoming longer
and longer but still there
well it was not like that
but once it was out of sight
it was not anywhere
with the dreams of that night
whether remembered or not
and wherever it was
arriving from on its way
through you must have been growing
shorter even as you
watched it appear and go
you still cannot say how
but you cannot even tell
whether the subway coming
in time out of the tunnel
is emerging from
the past or the future

—W. S. MERWIN

If a kid pulls at your beard, pull at his hair. He'll get the idea.

A good catchphrase helps—"On the Stages for All Ages," "Impressions of Mr. Lincoln," "The Living Lincoln," and so forth. It's also good to have an assortment of routines. One presenter, Charles Brame, offers "An Evening With Abe," "Hospitality," and "Mix and Mingle."

The Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois, and Ford's Theater—"these are Carnegie Hall for a Lincoln," I was told.

Pay varies. It depends on the job and on the Lincoln. The ALP's president, Dan Bassuk, for instance, gets \$750 for a school visit. A parade or an evening performance can run \$600 to \$1,000. To have Max and Donna Daniels come to your wedding as Abe and Mary, mingle with the guests, and give a toast that ends with a fervent "God will forever bless and preserve—this *Union*" will run you \$150.

That said, some Lincolns charge only a pittance. I got the impression that what really matters is not the money but the recognition and regard it represents. Take Cranston "Bud" Green, from Versailles, Missouri. He is seventy-six years old and walks with a sassafras cane. There was a buzz about him at the convention, not just because he is one of the oldest Lincolns but because he came straight to Beckley from open-heart surgery. I made a point of talking to him, and we sat on rocking chairs on the hotel porch. I told him about my book, and he told me he was manic-depressive. He told me about growing up during the Great Depression, about raising Christmas trees, about working as a pitchman at fairs. He told me about the hard times he has had. I asked him if being Lincoln helped. "Yes, it helps," he said. "But it can hurt, too. It hurts when the teachers don't call."

Hearing this, I thought of a letter Lincoln sent in 1842 to his friend Joshua Speed, who was in a funk at the time. "I think if I were you," Lincoln wrote, "in case my mind were not exactly right, I would avoid being *idle*; I would immediately engage in some business, or go to making preparations for it, which would be the same thing."

Lincoln believed in hard work, and the Lincoln presenters—far from being the eccentrics I had expected—are really quite ordinary followers of this most American religion. They are attached to Lincoln by the simple fact that he provides a text, a character, a story to work on—not in the abstract sense but in the very concrete sense of attention paid, time spent, dollars earned.

During a bus trip to the nearby coal-mine museum someone announced me as the newest Lincoln, and I got a big round of applause. Afterward we walked down a road to an old schoolhouse and had our picture taken as a group. I had been in dress for a few hours, and by then the strangeness seemed perfectly ordinary.

After I got home, Dan Bassuk sent me a photograph of me with Bud Green. He enclosed a note on ALP stationery. "Good to make a Lincoln out of you," he wrote. ▀

DEGREES OF EVIL

*Some thoughts on Hitler, bin Laden,
and the hierarchy of wickedness*

BY RON ROSENBAUM

Illustration by Mark Ulriksen

.....

It's such a highly charged term, "evil," and so are its recently revived elaborations "evil ones" and "evildoers"—words that President Bush has applied to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. That doesn't mean "evil" is a useless term. It can specify something important, but we should know what it is specifying, because tossing the term around indiscriminately can devalue it, rob it of its very specific gravitas. There is evil and there is evil—the word has hierarchies and degrees—distinctions to be drawn and commonalities to be sought, when making comparisons between Hitler and bin Laden, for instance.

One of the curious, paradoxical things I discovered during the dozen or so years I spent examining the ways in which Adolf Hitler's crimes have been explained by historians, philosophers, and theologians (for a book called *Explaining Hitler*) was the reluctance of so many experts to apply the word "evil" to Hitler. This was in part a kind of displacement syndrome: it wasn't really Hitler who was responsible for Nazi crimes, but "the forces of history" that he embodied. Blame *them*. Or it was not Hitler himself so much as the irresistible pressure of a distorted ideology. Blame *that*. Or, for Freudian "psychohistorians," it was not Hitler, it was his unconscious drives. Blaming Hitler, attributing his crimes to him personally, to his conscious "agency," as it's called by the postmodernists (who don't believe in it), was considered a quaint throwback to a less sophisticated era of analysis. But there was as well an understandable reluctance to use a word—"evil"—that had been robbed of meaning and force by over-application.

I found it useful to look into the philosophical literature on the question of defining evil, where one discovers not a single, all-encompassing evil but hierarchies and degrees that distinguish natural evils ("acts of God," in the theological and insurance-company vocabularies) from man-made evils—flu epidemics from anthrax attacks, for instance. And among man-made evils one finds distinctions between the mindset of the perpetrator who does evil under the illusion that he's doing *good* and that of the evildoer who knows he's committing a crime. The latter falls into a more rarefied

category in the literature: one often called "wickedness," which itself can be divided into "ordinary wickedness," "selfish wickedness," "conscientious wickedness," "heteronomous (just following orders) wickedness," and the highest (or lowest) degree, "malignant wickedness"—doing evil for evil's sake. (Even self-professed Satanists can be exempted from the latter category, because they believe that Lucifer *deserves* to be God. Satan is the good guy; there's just been a big mistake.)

But the defining moment in the learning process, the moment that crystallized the debate over Hitler's evil for me, came during a conversation with the influential British historian H. R. Trevor-Roper. Eventually I came to disagree with the view he expressed, but it dramatically defined one pole of the ongoing argument.

As I recall, during the latter part of my talk with Trevor-Roper a noisy chess tournament was going on in the common room of London's Oxford-Cambridge Club, and I had to lean forward to make myself heard—Trevor-Roper was nearly eighty back then, in 1994. I remember the details because what he said was so memorable. I had asked him about Hitler's consciousness of his crimes—one of the two crucial variables in defining degrees of evil. The other variable is the scale of the crime: at what point does an order of magnitude in the number of murders—the difference between, say, six million and six thousand, or between six thousand and six—make a difference in the order of magnitude of the evil attributable to the perpetrator? Consider the uneasiness of some over the discrepancy between the universally reported September 11 "6,000" and the newer number, now believed to be closer to 4,000. At what point do numbers matter?

Most people (not all) would agree that a difference in degree between six million and six can be discerned, if not precisely defined. But defining degrees of evil involves calculations of both mindset and magnitude, whereby a lower body count might in some cases represent a greater degree of evil or a higher body count a lesser. Stalin's body count, for instance, is now generally considered greater than Hitler's (depending on who's counting), and yet some post-

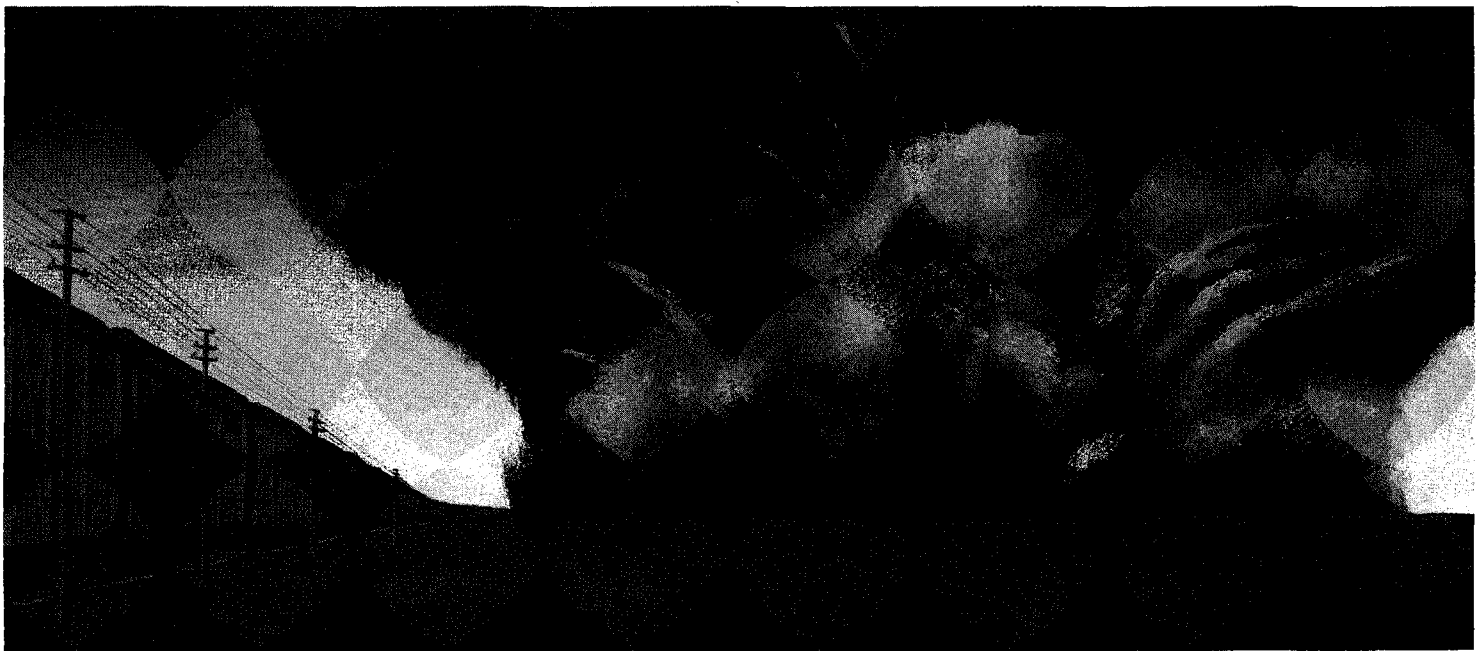
modern Marxists still argue that there's a qualitative difference between Stalin's murders and Hitler's—that Stalinism was a lesser evil than Hitlerism, because Soviet communism was—originally, they say—motivated by utopian idealism rather than Hitlerian race hatred, and the tens of millions of murders were an unfortunate (but really unrelated) “side effect.”

The post-Holocaust debate over the definition of Hitler's evil can be said to have begun in 1947, when Trevor-Roper published what was not just one of the first postwar biographies of Hitler but also one of the first postwar visions of his mind: *The Last Days of Hitler*. He brought to the subject the shrewd perspective of a historian (whose specialty before the war had been the sixteenth- and seventeenth- century religious wars) and the even shrewder perspective of an experienced MI-6 counterintelligence agent whose wartime task had been to maintain liaison with anti-Hitler plotters in Germany.

even though Hitler is dead, the difficult questions he raised about evil and human nature have not been laid to rest.

Trevor-Roper obtained access to the captured aides and flunkies who had participated in the burning of Hitler's body. He tracked down Hitler's last will and political testament, in which Hitler implicitly accused the German people of failing to make the kind of martyrlike sacrifice for the cause that he would make with his suicide, and in which he called on those left alive to continue his holy war against the “universal poisoners of all nations,” the Jews.

Based on this and on his later immersion in the stenographic record of Hitler's wartime dinner-table conversations, (known as the “Table Talk”), Trevor-Roper had developed a strong conviction about the nature of Hitler's mind. It was a conviction I evoked with a question that evening in the Oxford-Cambridge Club: “Did Hitler know he was doing



A few months after the Nazi surrender Trevor-Roper made his way through the rubble of Berlin to Hitler's bunker, hoping to find clues there to the mind of a mass murderer. His official assignment from MI-6 was to combat the “survival myth,” as it would soon be called. One of the first signs of the coming Cold War disinformation struggle was Stalin's decision to spread rumors that Hitler was alive and living under Allied protection in the British zone of Berlin (even though by then Stalin seems to have had Hitler's organs stored in jars in Moscow).

Despite the success of Trevor-Roper's mission—to establish the facts of Hitler's last days in the bunker, of his suicide, and of the disposal of his body—the survival myth lives on in tabloid culture (usually in a South American context), perhaps because it speaks to some not unjustified apprehension in the collective unconscious that

wrong when he was committing his crimes? Did he know his acts were evil?”

“Oh, no,” Trevor-Roper told me with great asperity. “Hitler was convinced of his own rectitude.” (It was striking to see this formulation echoed by a Muslim in Hamburg who defended the motives of the September 11 suicide bombers: “Those who did this had to be convinced they were right,” he told Joseph Lelyveld, of *The New York Times*.) Hitler, Trevor-Roper maintained, didn't think he was doing wrong; he thought he was doing right, doing good. In his own mind he was an idealist. Hitler frequently compared himself to heroic medical scientists like Pasteur and Koch: the Jews were a “racial bacillus”; he was a germ fighter; extermination was a medical measure to stamp out a plague threatening all that was good. That he was dreadfully wrong in this conviction does not of necessity mean that he was *knowingly* wrong.

This is Hitler as true believer—Hitler as Osama bin Laden.

Indeed, those who take this position come close to portraying Hitler as the genocidal equivalent of a suicide bomber. His apparent decision, in 1944, to withdraw troops and trains from the besieged Eastern front in order to expedite the transport of Jews to the death camps is the act most often cited to support this vision of a self-destructive “idealist” Hitler. This is a Hitler who would choose to lose the war, see the destruction of Germany—in effect, blow himself up and end as a martyr in order to maximize the mass murder of the true enemy, the Jews.

The problems implicit in applying Trevor-Roper’s true-believer vision of evildoers to the current crisis are dramatized in a report in the *Guardian* of October 16, 2001, by Jeanette Winterson (cited in *The New Republic*’s “Idiocy Watch”), who wrote,

Such remarks illustrate two kinds of problems, evidentiary and moral, raised by Trevor-Roper’s view. Assume for the moment that Hitler and bin Laden were indeed convinced of their own rectitude in committing mass murder. This view is unsatisfying to many, because it suggests a lesser degree of culpability, a lesser degree of evil, than if Hitler and bin Laden had been convinced of their criminality. This is a problem that has vexed philosophers since Socrates first insisted (in the *Protagoras*) that people do wrong only if they are deluded into thinking they are doing right or if they are rendered incapable, by reason of ignorance or mental defect, of knowing right from wrong (the “moral imbecility” of the psychotic killer).

Assigning different degrees of evil to different quantities and qualities of murder may seem at first to be an angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin matter, but it is something we the people routinely engage in when, as juries, we decide the



My friend Ruth Rendell was in conversation at the Cheltenham Literary Festival ... Someone asked a question about pure evil, citing the terrorist attacks on America ... Rendell replied that we could not categorize such attacks as evil, since they were carried out from the highest motives and in the name of freedom. The audience hated this reply—there was a collective and audible shudder. Yet who reading bin Laden’s speeches can doubt it? There is no cynicism in the man.

And not long afterward I came upon these words from Stanley Fish, postmodern prof par excellence: “The moral vision of Hitler *is* a moral vision,” he told Bill O’Reilly on the Fox News Channel in a discussion about Hitler and bin Laden. “We have to distinguish between moralities we approve and moralities we despise.” In other words, the true-believer rationale can lead to an indiscriminate relativism.

difference between first- and second-degree murder, between voluntary and involuntary manslaughter, very often according to calculations of mindset. In that light I once, perhaps unfairly, characterized Trevor-Roper’s view of a Hitler convinced of his own rectitude as “the Menendez brothers defense of Hitler.” The brothers, you’ll recall, blew away their parents with shotguns before going on a spree with the inheritance, and then claimed in court that they shouldn’t be convicted of first-degree murder, because they were sincerely, if mistakenly, convinced that their parents were planning to kill *them*. They had acted in self-defense. Analogously, in Trevor-Roper’s view, Hitler was sincerely, if mistakenly, convinced that the Jews were out to destroy the master race and thus must be eliminated for the good of humanity. And Osama bin Laden was sincerely, if mistakenly, convinced that he had to murder innocents to defend Islam.

At what point, at what order of magnitude, does the number of dead override the “rectitude” rationale? If one “sincerely, if mistakenly,” kills six? Six thousand? Six million? Does a holy crusade justify killing an unlimited number of infidels if one “sincerely” believes that one is carrying out God’s will to rescue humanity from evil? Could a single person therefore justify killing *everyone else* and still be thought to be convinced of his own rectitude if he believed it was for the greater glory of God? Is there an accepted ceiling above which no such justification, however sincere, obtains? Common sense suggests that at some point even the most oblivious mass murderer recognizes that he has crossed a border and gone beyond sincere idealism. But who says common sense rules in such cases?

Even if the “rectitude” view leads to one *reductio ad absurdum* after another, it may in some ways be attractive because it’s a perversely comforting vision. Thinking of Hitler and bin Laden as true believers unaware that they are perpetrating evil does not necessarily excuse their crimes, but it does avoid acknowledging an almost unbearable possibility: that human beings are capable of committing mass murder not with an “idealistic” rationale but for self-advancement or self-aggrandizement.

That is the specter raised by those who oppose Trevor-Roper’s view of Hitler’s evil. Their view was initially represented by Alan Bullock, an Oxford historian who published *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* in 1952, and became Trevor-Roper’s great rival as postwar Hitler explainer. I say “initially” because Bullock subsequently altered his view, but his original position, still held by many others, depicted Hitler as a believer in nothing at all. Bullock’s Hitler was a cynic, a con artist, a mountebank, who didn’t even believe his professed anti-Semitism. Whipping up hatred of the Jews was just an opportunistic way to exploit for his own ambition a defeated nation’s hunger for a scapegoat. The influential post-Holocaust theologian Emil Fackenheim told me in 1993 in Jerusalem that he, too, believed that Hitler was “just an actor” posing as an anti-Semite.

Bullock subsequently changed his view to one that incorporates elements of Trevor-Roper’s true-believer hypothesis: Hitler was “an actor who believed in the part.” In other words, Hitler started out as a cynic and an opportunist, but success made him a true believer in the messianic image he’d created.

But in either view, Bullock and Fackenheim impute more knowingness to Hitler than Trevor-Roper did. Evidence that Hitler was conscious of his criminality includes his recurrent efforts to conceal his authorship of the Final Solution. In effect he was the first Holocaust denier, ostentatiously calling the Holocaust a “rumor” in one of his “Table Talk” conversations. Hitler never publicly praised the death camps to the world the way bin Laden publicly praised the September 11 attacks in a tape meant for broadcast shortly after September 11—the one in which he pro-

claimed, “God has blessed a group of vanguard Muslims, the forefront of Islam, to destroy America.” And now we know from the tape released on December 13 that even if he didn’t claim authorship in public (perhaps because of his Taliban hosts at the time), he was not shy about boasting and laughing about it in private. And in that tape—“Osama’s Table Talk”—he was even more willing to laugh out loud about mass murder than Hitler and his cronies were in *their* “Table Talk.”

In the sometimes paradoxical-seeming hierarchy of evil that philosophers have adumbrated, such willingness to sanction mass murder openly, as a mission from God, might consign bin Laden to a lesser category of evil than the one to which Hitler’s somewhat surreptitious and self-protective approach to mass murder consigns him. Bin Laden has done evil, but Hitler was knowingly wicked. That’s true only if one accepts the notion that bin Laden is, like Trevor-Roper’s Hitler, “sincere”—a *true* true believer. From the fragmentary knowledge we have of bin Laden’s past it’s possible to cobble together an argument suggesting a greater similarity to Bullock’s revised version of Hitler: bin Laden as an actor who became convinced by his own act.

According to some accounts, bin Laden, a wealthy heir to a billion-dollar Saudi contracting fortune, spent time as a player in every sense of the word—from womanizer to actor—before entering into *jihad* in behalf of the Afghan *mujahideen*. And just as Hitler never left behind the artist, bohemian, and embittered aesthete he played in his “lost years” in Vienna, bin Laden may not have entirely left behind the player he was before he donned the robes of a holy warrior. It’s not impossible to imagine that bin Laden brought some of a player’s love for the game to the game of international terrorism. He may well have become a true believer, but the consummate shrewdness of his operations suggests that he retains some of the cynicism of the operator.

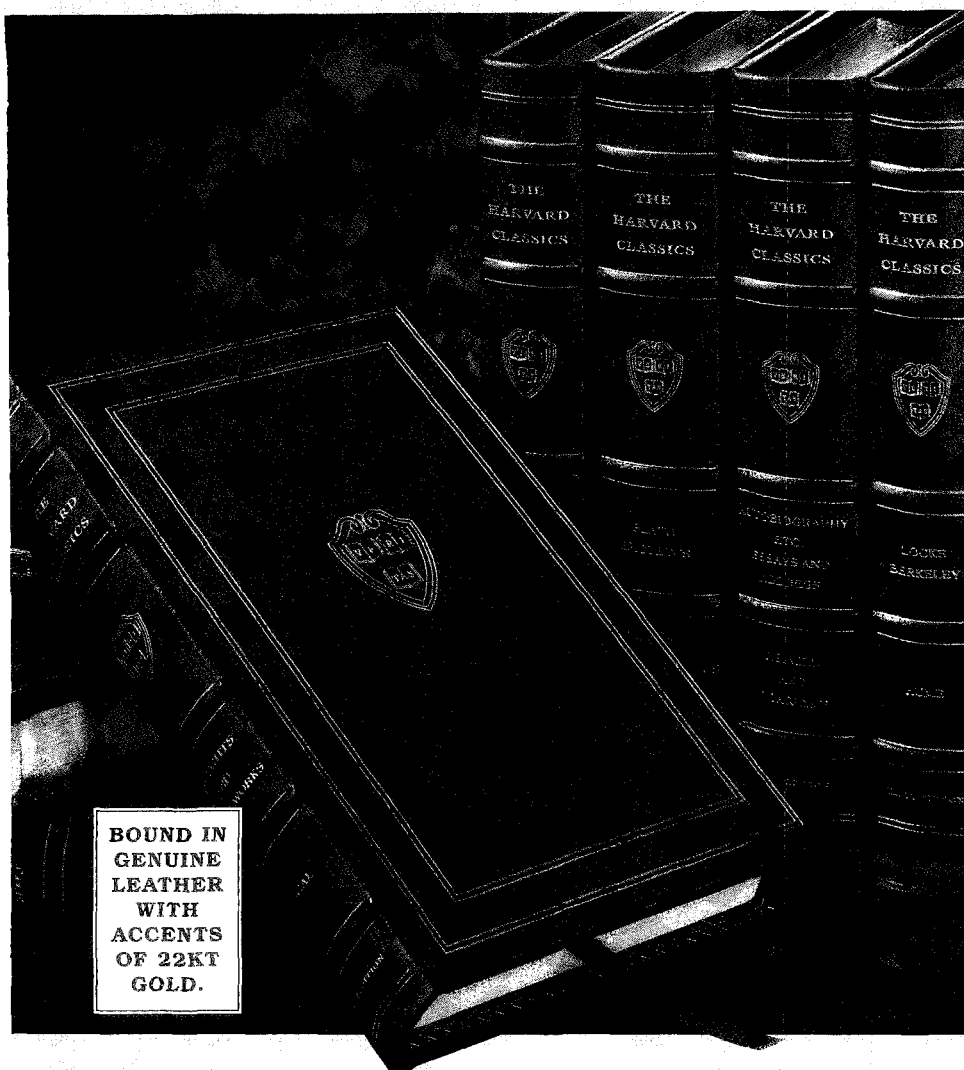
Bullock believes that it was this very dialectic of cynic and true believer that did Hitler in, lost him the war—when the actor came to believe too blindly in his true-believer act. “The extraordinary thing about this,” Bullock told me, “and this is where the element of hubris comes into it, is when Hitler gets to that point where he no longer *manipulates* his image but believes in it *entirely*—when he drops the manipulation. Then he’s destroyed.” He was successful as long as he believed *and* manipulated, Bullock argued, but when he came to believe too much in his own act, when he believed that he was a savior, a messiah, and could do no wrong, he made tremendous mistakes in military strategy (refusing to permit even tactical retreats; refusing to abandon the doomed siege of Stalingrad) and lost the war. (Events as of this writing suggest this may also be happening to bin Laden.)

Even if Hitler and bin Laden share that particular dialectic of evils, that doesn’t tell us the degree of evil that

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should be ascribed to each of them. Can either man be said to exhibit that highest degree in the technical hierarchy of evil, “malignant wickedness”—evil for evil’s sake? There is some dispute in the philosophical literature over whether malignant wickedness actually exists in real life and real people.

The examples of malignant wickedness cited in philosophical treatises tend to come more often from literature than from life: such icons of evil as Shakespeare’s Richard III and Iago (“motiveless malignancy”—Coleridge) and Milton’s Satan (“Evil be thou my good”). The pop-culture version shows up in James Bond—movie villains and their clones.

Does it make a difference what degree of wickedness we ascribe to Hitler and bin Laden? It’s important to believe at least in knowing, “conscientious” wickedness—if we don’t, then we don’t believe in free will (the freedom to choose ill) or individual responsibility, and evil is psychologized away. If we don’t believe in ordinary, knowing wickedness, we can’t condemn Hitler for anything more than a well-meaning ideological mistake or bin Laden for anything more than a well-meaning religious mistake. (Some moral relativists have difficulty doing even *that*: Who says bin Laden’s belief is less valid than our disbelief?)

It’s not clear, however, how important it is to decide whether Hitler and bin Laden belong to a category beyond “conscientious wickedness”—the one called “malignant wickedness.” But one respected philosopher, Berel Lang, the author of widely admired studies such as *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* and “The History of Evil and the Future of the Holocaust,” has made a case that Hitler does belong in that rarefied category. Lang argues that what gives the Hitler project its unique degree of evil—what makes it a new chapter in the history of evil, as he calls it—is its conscious *artistry*. The question came up in my conversation with Lang back in 1997, when I mentioned Hitler’s “Table Talk” depiction of the Final Solution as a false rumor. With a stenographer recording his words for “history,” Hitler told Himmler and Heydrich, his partners in genocide, that it was terrible the way people were saying they were murdering the Jews when they were just transporting them to “the marshy parts of Russia.” We spoke of the way Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich must have savored the inventiveness of the “rumor” remark, which managed to raise the Final Solution for their private delectation while denying the reality for the stenographic record.

“The inventiveness seems to me in some ways to come to the heart of the matter, even though it’s subtler than the brutality,” Lang told me. “Primo Levi used the phrase ‘needless violence,’ which is not quite what I’m saying. It’s the element of *gratuitousness*, but it’s more than gratuitousness.

There seems to be this imaginative protraction, elaboration that one finds best exemplified in art forms, and which in art we usually take to be indicative of a consciousness, an artistic consciousness.”

This hyperattentive artistic consciousness could be found not just in the Nuremberg rallies but in the design of the death camps, in the hideous irony of the words above the gates to Auschwitz: “*Arbeit macht frei*” (“Work will make you free”). The perpetrators of this cruel deception seem to have taken a kind of artistic pleasure in crafting its sadistic irony, Lang believes. I asked Lang if this might have something to do with the fact that Hitler was a failed artist and surrounded himself with fellow would-be aesthetes: Heydrich the concert violinist, Goebbels the novelist, Göring the art connoisseur. Hitler’s contribution to the history of evil (his “new chapter”), Lang replied, was the way the Nazis turned evil into genocidal art.

I thought of my conversation with Berel Lang when, in the aftermath of September 11, it was reported that the German avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen called the twin-towers attack “the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos.” “Minds achieving something,” he said, “in an act that we couldn’t even dream of in music, people rehearsing like mad for ten years, preparing fanatically for a concert and then dying . . . Artists, too, sometimes try to go beyond the limits of what is feasible and conceivable, so that we wake up, so that we open ourselves to another world.” (Stockhausen later said his remarks had been taken out of context; what he *really* meant was that it was “the greatest work of art *by Lucifer*.”)

Still, Stockhausen’s swooning admiration for the artistry of the attacks may be valuable testimony to the existence of something real that he intuitively feels about the mind of the “artist” behind the September 11 attacks: Stockhausen ascribes to bin Laden’s act some of the same qualities Lang ascribes to Hitler’s evil: the “imaginative protraction” and “elaboration” of an act with an artistic consciousness behind it (“people rehearsing for ten years and then dying”). Others have been unable to resist describing the attack on the twin towers in aesthetic terms, as having a “terrible beauty” and so on. This may reflect some confusion about the nature of beauty, but it also suggests that Lang is on to something in locating the ultimate degree of wickedness in the way evil reaches its apotheosis as a genocidal art form. That and the laughter. Bin Laden’s complacent grin, the self-satisfied chuckle while discussing the details of murdering thousands with “gas” (“the fire from the gas in the planes”). When I saw that, I couldn’t help thinking of Hitler and his cronies sharing a silent laugh when they jested about the Final Solution’s being just a “rumor.” The final malignant twist of wickedness: turning the murder of innocents, turning public tragedy, into private comedy. It is in that shared laughter that Hitler and bin Laden shake hands. ▀

THE NEXT THREAT TO NATO

The Baltics are knocking at NATO's door. Don't let them in

BY JEFFREY TAYLER

Illustrations by Seymour Chwast

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P ledging to erase the “false lines that have divided Europe for too long,” President George W. Bush, in a speech given in Warsaw last June, urged the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to extend invitations for a new round of expansion during its forthcoming Prague summit, in November of 2002. If that happens, the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are likely to be among the next invitees, and may in fact be the only ones. The notion of creating an undivided Europe is an inspiring one, dating from the beginning of the Cold War; but by bringing into NATO countries that were once Soviet republics, the alliance would cross a line and create unprecedented long-term threats to its security.

To gather material for this article I recently began a trip to the Baltic states in Narva, a placid northeastern Estonian town bathed in sea breezes. Though small (its population is just over 72,000), Narva occupies a large place in Russian history. It was here, in 1700, that Russia launched its final campaign in a centuries-long quest to become a European power—attacking the Swedes, who were then in control of much of the Baltic coast. The battle ended in defeat for the Russians, but the war did not: by 1721 Russia had conquered the Baltic territories as far southwest as Riga (the capital of present-day Latvia) and had built a new capital, Saint Petersburg, on the Gulf of Finland. Later in that century Russia, through a partition agreement with Austria and Prussia, gained control of the rest of the Baltics, and would retain it (except for the period between the two world wars) until the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991.

The Baltic countries have been clamoring at NATO's door since they achieved independence, also in 1991. They have found receptive ears for their demands on both sides of the Atlantic, and this is natural: ever since the Knights of the Sword and the Teutonic Order converted most of the



Balts to Catholicism, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Baltics have culturally belonged to the West. The Baltic peoples purport to share the West's values, cited as “democracy, human rights and the rule of law” on the NATO Web site. “Values”—or at least those to which NATO refers—are no longer merely fodder for the rumination of philosophers or embassy cultural attachés; they have become *casus belli*, as NATO operations in Bosnia and Yugoslavia have shown, and the protection of them warrants sustained aerial bombardment, military occupation, and the establishment of de facto protectorates over non-Western peoples.

Since September 11 the proposed expansion of NATO has attracted new publicity, even urgency. NATO itself has returned to prominence, by invoking for the first time Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, which states that “an armed attack against one or more [NATO members] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” The alliance has welcomed offers of extensive cooperation from Russia in the fight against terrorism, but the possibility that NATO might encroach on former Soviet soil has provoked the Kremlin to warn of renewed tensions with the West and has disturbed the Russian public. Since its war against Yugoslavia, NATO has come for Russians to stand more than ever for Western aggression and interference in what Russia still regards as its spheres of influence (as evidenced by violent demonstrations in 1999 at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, protesting NATO's war over Kosovo).

While making unprecedented moves to help the United States and its allies do battle in Afghanistan, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, has continued to resist the expansion of NATO into the territories of the former Soviet Union, which Russia calls its Near Abroad—a designation reflecting geographic proximity, shared history, and Moscow's presumed right to

hegemony. During a visit to Brussels early last October, Putin stressed that although he favored a "widening and deepening" of relations between NATO and Moscow, he would not cease opposing the alliance's eastward expansion unless NATO evolved from a military to a "political" organization. This is improbable, given that for the first time in NATO's history a member state has come under attack.

Nevertheless, Putin's remarks bespeak how seriously Russia views NATO's encroachment on its Near Abroad. Moreover, his words may presage developments about which NATO planners would rather not think. If NATO expands to include the Baltic states, it risks acquiring a flash point for tension with Russia that could compromise, if not destroy, the alliance, just as the alliance is beginning to exercise its role as the bulwark of the West—a role that, this time at least, it has needed Russian assistance to perform. Although NATO's mission has been broadened since the end of the Cold War to encompass peacekeeping, the resolution of ethnic disputes, and even the promotion of economic progress, its primary goal is still, as the North Atlantic Treaty states, the defense of "the freedom, common heritage and civilization" of NATO members, and the promotion of "stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area." Put simply, any country that joins NATO must enhance the security of other member countries. If NATO confuses primary with secondary goals (as it did in Yugoslavia, where "values" motivated a military action that led to the deaths and displacement of thousands of Kosovar Albanians, an open-ended deployment of troops, and, eventually, the spread of Kosovo's ethnic conflict to Macedonia), it risks at best disunity, and at worst unwanted war.

NATO was founded in 1949 to defend against a Soviet attack on Western Europe. Although the Soviet Union exists no more, Russia retains 5,800 nuclear weapons; a chemical and biological arsenal; a military with at least 1.2 million soldiers that it has shown no hesitation about using, even against its own citizens (as the war in Chechnya illustrates); and a leadership that has made the restoration of great-power status a priority. The Kremlin continues to exert hegemony in the Near Abroad. It supports the pro-Russian Belarusian dictator Aleksandr Lukashenko and stations troops in Belarus; manipulates gas and oil supplies to Ukraine, Georgia, and other former republics, to ensure pro-Russian policies; and promotes common security and economic zones among members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which it dominates. As regards the Baltics, Russia has taken a subtle and clever approach: Russian borders with Estonia and Latvia have been demarcated, but the Kremlin, on "technical grounds," has refused to sign agreements that would enshrine them in law. (Recognized borders are a prerequisite for membership in NATO.) And in marked contrast to his predecessor, Putin has affirmed Russia's ties with *sootchestvenniki* (compatriots) in the Near Abroad, stressing

that although ethnic Russians may be scattered among fifteen formerly Soviet republics, they make up a "unified people." These factors have prompted the Baltics to pursue NATO membership with understandable urgency.

What would membership of the Baltics mean for NATO? With a combined population of less than eight million and a location in a remote corner of Europe, the Baltics would offer minimal gains if they were to join the alliance, while posing unsettling strategic risks for Russia. Narva is only eighty-five miles from downtown Saint Petersburg—a distance that a tactical nuclear missile could traverse in mere minutes. The southernmost Baltic state, Lithuania, borders both on the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad (where the headquarters of the Russian Baltic Fleet is located and where nuclear weapons may be stationed) and on Poland, a NATO member since 1999, when the alliance had its first round of expansion after the end of the Cold War. Were the Baltics' borders with Russia to become NATO's frontier with Russia, NATO would abut all of Kaliningrad's land borders and could therefore cut the area off at will. This and the potential proximity of NATO nuclear weapons to Russia's second largest city could, in a crisis, necessitate a hair-trigger state of alert on the Russian side.

(With respect to nuclear weapons, Russian military planners would no doubt derive little solace from future incarnations of the Founding Act, signed by NATO and Russia in 1997, which established the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, and in which NATO declared it had "no intention, no plan, and no reason" to station nuclear weapons on the soil of any future members. The act gave Russia a consultative role ("a voice ... not a veto," as President Clinton put it) in the council, and the Clinton Administration, much to Boris Yeltsin's embarrassment and political detriment, insisted publicly that the agreement was not legally binding. In any case, the council proved useless when conflict arose: Russia froze relations with NATO for the duration of the war against Yugoslavia.)

The demographic legacy of Soviet rule presents compelling additional reasons for NATO not to invite Estonia and Latvia (though it is not an issue in Lithuania, where ethnic-Russian immigration was minimal after World War II). During the 1950s the Soviet government began building electricity plants and exploiting oil-shale deposits in northeastern Estonia, and ethnic Russians seeking work flooded into the region. The Kremlin also made it a practice to settle retired military and KGB officers in Narva and elsewhere in the Baltics, thereby installing cadres of loyalists among peoples known for their hatred of and resistance to Soviet rule. (The Soviets fought native guerrilla insurgents in all three Baltic republics well into the 1950s.) Despite a post-Soviet exodus of some 16,000 Russians, mainly to Russia, Narva remains 95 percent Russian. (Here and below "Russian" means ethnic Russian, or Russian-speaking. Many of the "Russians" in the Baltics and elsewhere are Ukrainians or Belarusians whose first language is Russian.)

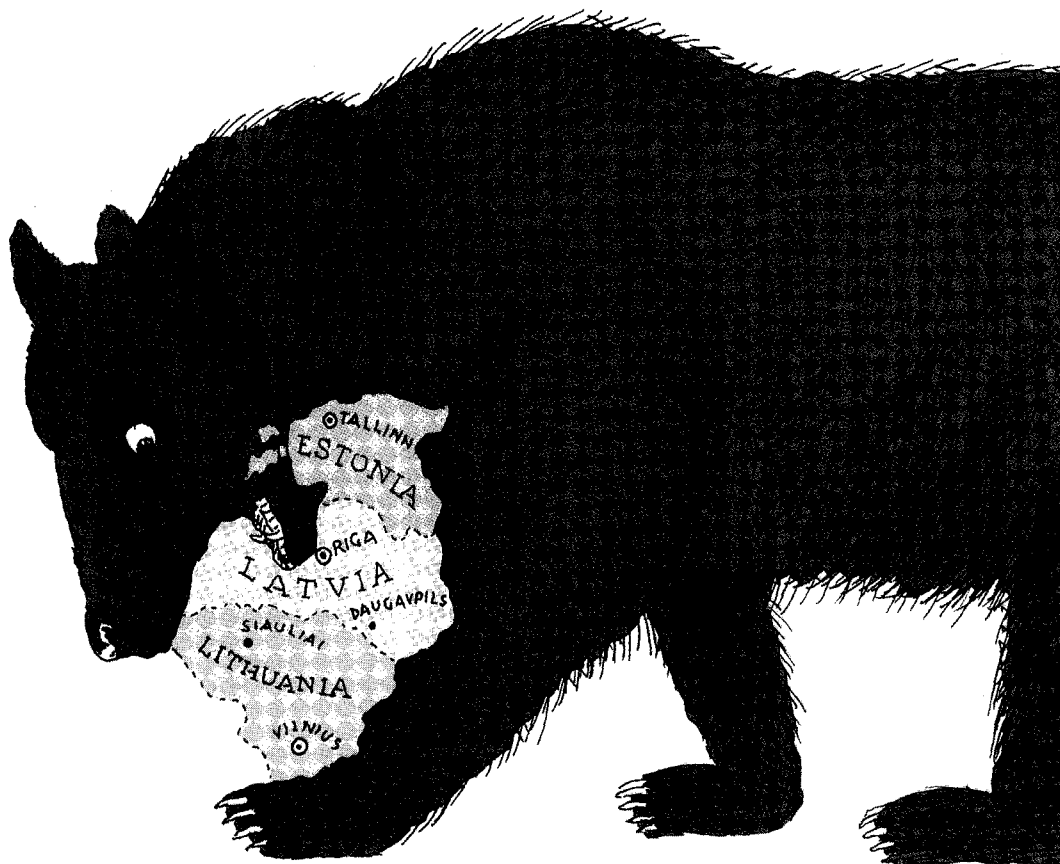
In Estonia 32 percent of the population is Russian, in Latvia 36 percent. Before the Soviet occupation eight percent of the population in Estonia and 10 percent in Latvia was Russian.

At independence Lithuania averted problems with its Russian minority (eight percent) by offering citizenship to all those resident on its soil. In Estonia and Latvia, however, the Balts have taken a policy tack reflecting the perceived threat posed by their more sizable Russian minorities. Since 1991, in order to encourage Russians to emigrate, the governments of these two states have effectively denied naturalization to the majority of them. Anyone who was a citizen before 1940 had a right to citizenship following independence, but those who arrived later (Russians, for the most part) were left without citizenship in their country of residence. (Russians born there since 1992 may naturalize.) To qualify for naturalization people who arrived after the war are obliged to pass an examination in the relevant local language, history, and constitution—but few Russians living in the non-Russian Soviet republics became fluent in the local languages. To pass the exam they must study for several years—a burdensome task for working adults, and an impossibility for many others, especially the elderly, who often possess neither the skills nor the drive to learn a foreign language.

As a result of these policies, some 200,000 Russian residents of Estonia have been without Estonian citizenship since independence. Another 70,000 are permanent residents but carry Russian passports. Of the latter, 17,000 are retired officers of the Soviet Army and the KGB, a matter of concern to the Estonian security agencies that are keeping track of them.

In Latvia the situation is similar. Some 550,000 residents of Latvia (almost all Russians) carry a *nepilsona pase* (“alien’s passport”); another 17,000 are permanent residents holding Russian passports; and an undetermined number are former military or KGB officers. All in all, they form a sullen lot, and I sensed the same suspicion, frustration, and anger among Russians in the Baltics that I have seen in repressed peoples elsewhere in Eastern Europe—including in Kosovo under Yugoslav rule, and in ethnic Hungarian parts of Transylvania during the Ceaușescu era.

Baltic politicians dismiss talk of discrimination against their Russian minorities, but discrimination is evident to casual visitors and residents alike. In Latvia and Estonia—even in Narva and in cities like Tallinn and Riga, which are nearly half Russian—one rarely sees signs in Russian. In regions of Estonia where Russians make up half or more of the population, Russian enjoys the status of a second official language—but only fifteen minutes a day of state television is broadcast in it. In Latvia 75 percent of television broadcasting must be in Latvian. This leaves most Baltic Russians to view the world through the Russian radio and television stations available in all three countries—a counterproductive and potentially dangerous state of affairs for Baltic governments. Russians complained to me that when they do exercise their rights to broadcast or publish in their own language, they often face harassment from the tax authorities and other regulatory bodies. The situation is especially acute in Latvia, where Russians must by law change even their names to conform with Latvian grammar and spelling traditions (turning “Ivan” into “Ivans,” for example)—a humiliating and depersonalizing imposition. Professions from street sweeper to politician are assigned mandatory levels of linguistic proficiency which practitioners must attain and maintain, and a national language inspectorate monitors the mastery and use of Latvian by Russian residents on the job. The “illegal” use of Russian attracts fines, and may also result in closure of businesses or in surprise visits by the tax authorities.



All of this has incited animus among Baltic Russians toward their governments, and has indirectly, by engendering despair, led to high rates of alcoholism and drug abuse. (Almost a tenth of Narva's Russians—nearly a tenth of the city's population overall—are registered drug addicts.) Young Russians contend that they live under an "ethnocracy, not a democracy"; they have taken to referring to themselves as *inoplanetyane* ("extraterrestrials"); they complain that Balts will not hire them for jobs for which they are qualified; they feel spurned in the lands of their birth. Many would like to move to Russia but have no relations or contacts there. In the early 1990s tension was so acute in Narva that Russians even raised the notion of secession. Recent assaults by Estonians on Russian-speakers in northeastern Estonia have prompted Russians to circulate a petition demanding that Russian peacekeeping forces be stationed on Estonian soil. None of this bodes well for NATO membership, qualification for which is predicated to a great extent on internal stability, democracy, and a respect for human rights.

As I traveled around the Baltics, Russians repeatedly told me of their hope that the Baltic countries would join the European Union (in which their membership has been mooted for 2004) and forgo participation in NATO, which they view as an "enemy" organization—in part because of the Soviet-era propaganda with which they were brought up, and in part because of lingering anger at NATO's war in Yugoslavia. They banked on the EU's not tolerating abuses of minority rights and predicted that Baltic governments would be encouraged by membership in NATO to repress Russians or regard them as potential fifth columnists. Balts, for their part, referred to NATO membership as a matter of national survival while deriding the EU as a meddlesome promoter of onerous Western European standards. Public-opinion polls in all three countries reflect this ethnically skewed spread of support and opposition.

For a defense alliance serious questions arise from the Baltic states' treatment of their Russian minorities. If hostilities between NATO and Russia arose, to whom would Baltic Russians without citizenship turn if they felt threatened or oppressed? Could Russia exploit them to provoke dissent within NATO? How could states that deny them citizenship deserve their loyalty? On whose side would they fight? To the thousands of residents holding Russian passports in the Baltics, the answer to the last question is obvious.

Just as the Baltics are not relying on benign Russian intentions to safeguard their sovereignty, Western leaders should not ignore strategic risks and base their decisions about NATO expansion on Moscow's current anti-terrorist good will toward the alliance. This good will is currently being professed by the Kremlin as fervently as it is being denied by the Russian public, but it will probably dissipate as conflicts of interest re-emerge between Russia and members of the alliance. For example, tension could arise

over Taiwan, which the United States has a commitment to defend. Moscow was edging toward a strategic alliance with Beijing before September 11 (and may do so again, if relations with the West spoil), and China has taken an increasingly aggressive stance on unification. The presence of large populations of disgruntled Russian aliens in Estonia and Latvia, thousands of whom have military training and owe allegiance to Russia, on land that Moscow has traditionally regarded as its "window on the West" (and that formed part of Russia for nearly three centuries), may present nationalist Russian politicians with tempting opportunities for exploitation. Recall Hitler's use of the Germans in the Czechoslovak Sudetenland as a pretext for occupation prior to World War II. All these factors, plus Estonia's proximity to Saint Petersburg and the lack of signed border agreements with Russia, should preclude Estonia and Latvia from joining NATO. The isolation of the Kaliningrad exclave that would result from admitting Lithuania should preclude that country's entry into the alliance as well.

Arguments that Russia is weak and should therefore not figure in NATO's plans for expansion do not stand: Russia is still a nuclear power. Its potential as a spoiler, if not a destroyer, of international equilibrium should concern Western politicians. Humiliation stemming from NATO expansion into its Near Abroad may one day leave the Kremlin prey to nationalist sentiments among its public. Even diplomatically, admitting the Baltics into NATO makes no sense: NATO's expansion onto formerly Soviet soil now would leave little incentive for Moscow to cooperate with the West later. Furthermore, admitting the Baltic states may well "Finlandize" the alliance—that is, prompt the adoption of conciliatory policies toward Russia. Baltic members of NATO, eager to avoid unrest among large segments of their populations and disinclined to irritate their gigantic neighbor, might stymie decisive action by NATO toward Russia. Dissent racked a relatively homogenous NATO over intervention in Kosovo. What sort of accord could be reached if the security interests of the Baltics, both internal and external, had to be accommodated in a confrontation with Russia?

NATO planners must consider a future in which the anti-terrorist alliance between Russia and the West dissipates, and Moscow resumes policies contrary to Western interests. While encouraging Baltic accession to the EU, and the development of an EU military force compatible with NATO objectives, NATO should eschew expansion motivated by values and other secondary goals, and concentrate on its primary task—maintaining and defending the security of its current members. To be effective and cohesive as a military alliance, NATO must avoid being turned into a club that any country with a grudge against Russia may join—including countries with grudges as valid as those of the Baltics. Each new member should enhance the security of the present members—that should be the chief criterion for admission. The Baltics fail that test. ▀

PENUMBRA

A short story

BY BETH LORDAN

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Mark and Laura had come to Ireland, though neither of them had said so, in pursuit of a miracle caused by joy. In the months between his diagnosis and their trip, Mark had believed in his death only for brief moments, shudders of a fear that was near euphoria and that gave way almost immediately to shy pride, as if he'd discovered that he had a talent previously unsuspected by anyone. It was true: he, Mark Driscoll, high school history teacher, husband, father, as ordinary a person as he could imagine, had an incurable fatal disease, and was dying. It seemed impossible that he should be doing something so outrageously dramatic. *Who am I to be doing such a thing?* he'd nearly think. The cancer itself was real, of course—the treatments, the discomfort and expense and awkwardness of it. He'd lost his hair; his face was swollen by medication; he'd grown terribly thin; his balance had become poor; he had no desire for food or sex; even sleep was rarely restful. He knew that strangers found him grotesque and that old friends pitied him, and pitied Laura because she was burdened with him. He pitied her too. So when she proposed the trip to Ireland, he agreed: maybe something would happen. A miracle seemed to him no more unlikely, no more inexplicable, than dying. In any case, they'd always wanted to go to Ireland.

And then, without warning, on St. Patrick's Day, halfway through their three-week stay, as they were dressing to go out for a walk, a moment of terror came and stayed, deepened, thickened. He was suddenly blind with it: he staggered wildly out of the room where Laura stood barefoot, braiding her hair, and careened down the short hall of the hostel and into the street. He knew it, knew it: he was going to be dead. Five more months, maybe six, the oncologist had said in February, and he'd thought then, *Oh, that's good, it'll all be over before the holidays*. But now, for the first time, he knew that he would be dead, and he could not bear it, and he stood in the chilly Galway street and wept in helpless, wordless fear against the side of a building.

Laura came and got him, and helped him back inside, to the room, to the bed, and sat with him, her hand on his chest, until the sobbing stopped and he was quiet.

When he could speak, he said, "I'm afraid."

"Of course you are," she said. "So am I." And then, quietly, sadly, she began telling her fears—the loneliness, the children's confusion, the future without his company, growing old and facing her own death without him.

She had said these things before; maybe the story of her widowhood comforted her. But hearing her tell it, he realized now, had pleased him. He'd been flattered, he could see now, and the tawdriness of that, its near obscenity, forced a groan from his chest, and he turned his face to the wall.

"Listen," she said, "it's been raining for two days, and we've been stuck in here. That's all this is—bad cabin fever." She patted his back briskly. "What we need to do is get out, go somewhere. I think we should rent a car and go to Kerry."

He couldn't admit his fear, how absolute it had been, and he couldn't say what this was now, this deep shadow of that fear, this understanding that life had nothing to do with him. Nothing mattered. Nothing at all. "All right," he murmured, and for the rest of that day and the next he did as she suggested, dressing, eating, walking within the flurry of her telephone calls and guidebook consultations, her plans for this complicated excursion to Kerry, the Ring of Kerry, Kerry the Kingdom. The darkness weighted his bones, his tongue, his vision, his mind: he would be dead. No: he would *be* nothing. He would not *be*. He felt only and obscurely that he should behave well, cause no pain or trouble.

He slept thinking that and woke the second morning beside her. He could feel that she was awake, lying quiet at the slight distance they kept between them now, since sex had stopped—the distance that had once held the pettiness and comfortable meannesses and easy generousities of marriage but was now filled with careful politeness. He was chilly, and thought of the blanket on their bed at home: it was a wool blanket; it had been pretty expensive; they had discussed buying it; it was a blanket like the blankets of his childhood, weighty and rough.

He wanted it. To be there, under that blanket, in the bed and room and house that had been his for so long, was a thing he wanted, and he said aloud, "Laura, we have to go home, now, today."

She stroked his back. "You know we can't do that," she said.

"Jesus," he said, "why not?"

She stopped her hand and then took it away. In his mind he imagined her answers to his question: the cost of changing tickets, Kerry, he'd feel better soon—and to all the answers he replied silently, *So what, so what?*

"You're upset," she said gently.

"I'm not upset, Laura—I'm dying, and I want to do it at home, not on the damned sidewalk in a foreign country."

He knew now that he would not die heroically, or with wisdom or humor, or by the generous courage of suicide; he wished at least to do it privately. He insisted, bluntly, immovably, as they dressed and ate and walked beside the bay and came back to the hostel, and there, hours later, she finally agreed.

And then, as she left the room to begin the necessary telephone calls, an island, distant and stone-blue, surfaced through the calmed despair of his mind.

All through the afternoon, while he dozed and Laura talked to travel agents and to family members back in Idaho, the small island grew more solid, soothing him, even when she reported that they couldn't get a flight with connections until Thursday. As evening fell and she finished, and came and sat on the edge of the bed beside him and sighed, the island was so close and real that he could almost make out the welter of stone walls, the noise of waves against cliffs.

"We've still got three days," she said into the near dark. "Maybe we could do something."

"Two full days," he agreed. "Not long enough to get to Kerry and back, is it?" It was barely a question.

"No," she said softly, and then, "but thanks," and in a moment she went on. "Maybe we could go to the Aran Islands—Lyle's wife said it would be sunny there." She had her hands in fists in her lap, tapping her knuckles together.

Lyle was an older American man they had met and chatted with most mornings on their walk beside the bay—a man, Mark had thought before, pretty obviously smitten with Laura, and embarrassed by it, because he was quite a bit older, and because Mark was sick, a poor rival. Mark had found it a little irritating that Laura had been so oblivious, but he hadn't quite been willing to tease her about it. And then this morning Lyle's wife had come with him, so maybe she'd noticed it too, in something Lyle had said, or hadn't said. At any rate, she'd come along this morning, and she had said the Aran Islands were sunny—"Bright as Arizona," in fact—and he'd forgotten, had hardly heard her, but surely that suggestion explained this island in his mind.

"When we get home, it'll still be March," Laura said, hurrying through something wretched in her voice. "We could use a little sun."

She had given up a great deal, so he asked, "Is that what you want?" And when she said, "Yes," he said, "All right, then—tomorrow?"

"I think the bus for the ferry leaves at nine and three." She reached across his chest and turned on the lamp. "I'll

get the tour book. Maybe we could take the later one, and spend the night?"

The light and the book, full of photographs and advice, replaced the odd, bare island of his imagination with Inishmore, the largest of the three islands, where they'd see the huge ring fort and hidden holy wells, and buy sweaters for the children. He didn't mind: when this was over, they would go home, where he would wait, among familiar faces and familiar things, to die.

The ferry was a good-sized boat, with an open deck on top and another at the rear, and a big windowed cabin below. Mark and Laura sat inside, protected from the wind and spray and excitement of actually being on the sea. "You can sit outside if you want to," he said, and she said no, she was all right. She might nap a bit, she said, and he might want to too. He agreed, and the steady rhythm of the ferry's engine sent him to the edge of sleep; the island met him again, rising beyond a stretch of jumbled boulders where huge, glistening seals, their backs mottled gray and brown, gazed steadily past him, wise and placid, out to sea.

When he awoke, the ferry was slowing, and he knew they were approaching the real island. They waited, as had become their pattern, for most of the others to leave; then they made their slow way up the steps and across the little gangplank onto the pier at Kilronan, Inishmore.

The wind was cold, but the sun shone brilliantly on five minibuses lining the pier and, farther up, a dozen or so pony traps standing beside the road that led around a small beach. A ruddy-faced Irishman in a tweed Irish cap stood by each bus and each two-wheeled cart, calling out his offer of a tour to the people leaving the ferry. Beyond, on the slope behind a very tall, clearly modern Celtic cross, crowded the buildings that must be the village proper: a hotel, two pubs, other low buildings he couldn't identify.

All of it struck Mark as shabby, after the clean, wild barrenness of the island in his mind, but Laura said, "Oh, isn't it pretty?" so he kept that thought to himself. He said, "Well, here we are—what'll we do?"

"We ought to take one of those pony carts," she said, and her face was bright. "The book says they take you halfway up the island, to that big stone fort."

They walked slowly, and Mark watched a couple get into one of the carts and then grab the sides, their faces startled, as the pony began trotting and they bounced away. He shook his head. "I don't think my unpadded bones would take it," he said. "Why don't we find a place to sit down and take a look at the guidebook—see what's nearby?"

She shrugged, and he could feel her disappointment, but she said, "Okay—how about over there," pointing. There, at the lowest edge of the village, in front of a pair of new-looking sweater shops, a low wall curved behind several concrete benches.

As they walked past the pony carts and along the small



beach, among the other tourists and around the groups hurrying to board the return ferry, Mark hoped for something to see, something pleasant for her and possible for him.

"All right?" she said, and her voice was so simply kind that he was ashamed: she was kind, and this was the last of the Irish adventures—he should try to make it pleasant for her, at least. He thought of saying that Lyle's wife had been right about the sun, and then he thought he'd do better than that—he'd tell her that Lyle thought she was beautiful. Without thinking further, he said, "Lyle was attracted to you, you know."

"Lyle?" she said. "Oh—Lyle."

"He was—that's why he was so awkward when his wife came along."

She laughed softly and shook her head. They came to the benches and sat down.

"No—really," Mark said. "I'm serious."

"Oh, don't be silly," she said. She squeezed his hand and let it go, and opened her bag to find the guidebook.

"He probably dreams about you."

"I doubt that," she said, but he could see color rising in her cheek. She opened the book to the index in the back.

Her dismissal of his compliment made him stubborn. "Well, I know what I'm talking about," he said. "I've wanted some women that way." A gull glided in and began foraging in front of them. "You remember Kathy—she lived across from us in married-student housing? I used to think about her all the time, that long hair of hers. And then when I first started teaching at Polk High, there was a science teacher, Joanna. I don't know if you ever even met her, but there was

something about her hands." He watched the gull, thinking distantly of how much it looked like a pigeon, really. "Sometimes I'd be driving home, and the way she moved her hands would leap into my mind and take my breath away." Across the little bay return passengers were filing onto the ferry. "And then Toni—remember Toni?" He turned to her then, and saw that she did, and he saw too that she was waiting to be injured, but he found he couldn't stop. "I didn't actually dream about her, but I used to wake up Sundays sometimes, thinking about what it would be like—"

"For heaven's sake, Mark," she said, and that did stop him.

"I never did anything," he said.

Her eyes didn't change.

"I didn't," he said, and he heard the resentment in his voice and was astonished at it. What had he expected? He had meant to pay her a compliment at first, and then he'd begun bullying her with his memories. Had he thought she'd be grateful?

And yet, behind all that his resentment was real. He had tried to be nice, to be pleasant, to assure her of her attractiveness, and here she was with this accusing stare, as if he'd confessed infidelity. He'd been faithful—if faithful meant he'd never said anything, never touched another woman in other than a publicly affectionate way. But he had loved those women in a way, and half a dozen others, desiring them through long afternoons and upon waking and while driving home. "I just found them attractive," he said.

Slowly, her eyes hard now, she nodded, and turned from him to look out over the water, her hands tight on the book in her lap.

"I don't anymore," he said. "I don't feel that way anymore. About anybody."

She nodded again, without looking at him. "I know," she said. "It's all right."

"I just thought you should know," he said.

"It's all right," she said again, and carefully put the book back in her bag. She stood up. "I'm going to find a B and B." She adjusted the red scarf she wore over the shoulders of her coat, but she didn't look at him.

"Shall I wait here?" he said.

"That's a good idea," she said, and turned and walked away, toward the big cross and the clutter of village beyond it.

He watched her, seeing as if it were new how jaunty her walk was when she was angry. And she was certainly angry, and probably had a right to be.

They had talked about confessions in the support group he'd attended until Christmas, solemnly justifying their desire to set every record straight. And then one guy, even younger than Mark, had said, "Okay—so you tell it all, right? And then they say, 'Hey, you're in remission.' And then they say, 'Hey, you're cured!' And then she says, 'You bastard—you're history.'" Secretly willing to jinx marriage if that could bring a cure, giddy with the possibility, they'd laughed almost to tears.

He'd managed not to confess that he'd never really liked the couch she'd chosen, that he hadn't actually applied for the promotion he hadn't gotten, that he wouldn't have chosen to have a third child, even that he actually preferred his beef well done. And now, after all that, out of the dozens of misunderstandings that must now, in kindness, be allowed to stand—after all that, and knowing better (he could admit it now, alone on the bench), he'd gone and blundered into the worst of them.

She disappeared up the road into the village, and he turned back to the water. He was right about Lyle—he'd seen Lyle's face when Laura touched his arm as she spoke, seen how he watched her touch her own hair. Laura was beautiful as well as good. And yet, even before he got sick, he hadn't longed for her in years—not in that nearly swooning way that Lyle's eyes had betrayed. Not in the way he had longed for other women. That was still true, even if he shouldn't have said any of it.

She would return, of course. They'd been married twenty-one years. He watched the ferry cast off and start slowly out of the bay. Briefly he saw his island again, brilliantly sunlit, and Laura in her dark coat walking across its bare stones, the wind blowing her hair, small flowers bright in the stone walls. She would return, and they would have an evening, some kind of day tomorrow, and then they'd go home.

And he would die.

He tilted his hat to shield his face from the sun and closed his eyes, but the darkness of Laura's coat in the bright sunshine remained, a deep, wavering shadow.

"Driscoll, is it?"

Mark's stomach took a mad swoop as he struggled to his feet and took off his hat, the fragility of skin—the skin at Laura's temples, the softness of her stomach—tumbling through his mind. A woman his mother's age stood behind him, on the other side of the low wall. "Yes," he said, "I'm Mark Driscoll."

The sleeves of her sweater were pulled up to her elbows, and she wore a canvas apron; when she smiled, her false teeth were very white. "You are, of course," she said, "with the hat." It was a distinctive hat, brown leather and wide-brimmed, and both of them glanced at it there in his hand. "Your wife is after ringing the shop with a message if we saw you. She's taken a room at Ann Flaherty's for tonight, she says."

He managed to nod as if this made sense, through the insistent memory of the near dampness of Laura's breath against his throat, the texture of her hair against his lips. "Thank you," he said. "Ann Flaherty's."

"It's just up the hill," the woman said. "Not far at all—just past the Spar a bit and to the left. She has a Bord Fáilte sign."

"Ah," he said, and nodded again, suddenly and distinctly aware of a need to urinate. "Well, that's good news."

The woman pushed her hair back from her brow. "There's many open this early now," she said, "before Easter, though they didn't used to. The Germans come earlier every year. But Ann's is a good place—clean and airy, and she's her daughter to help her. She'll look after ye, I'm sure."

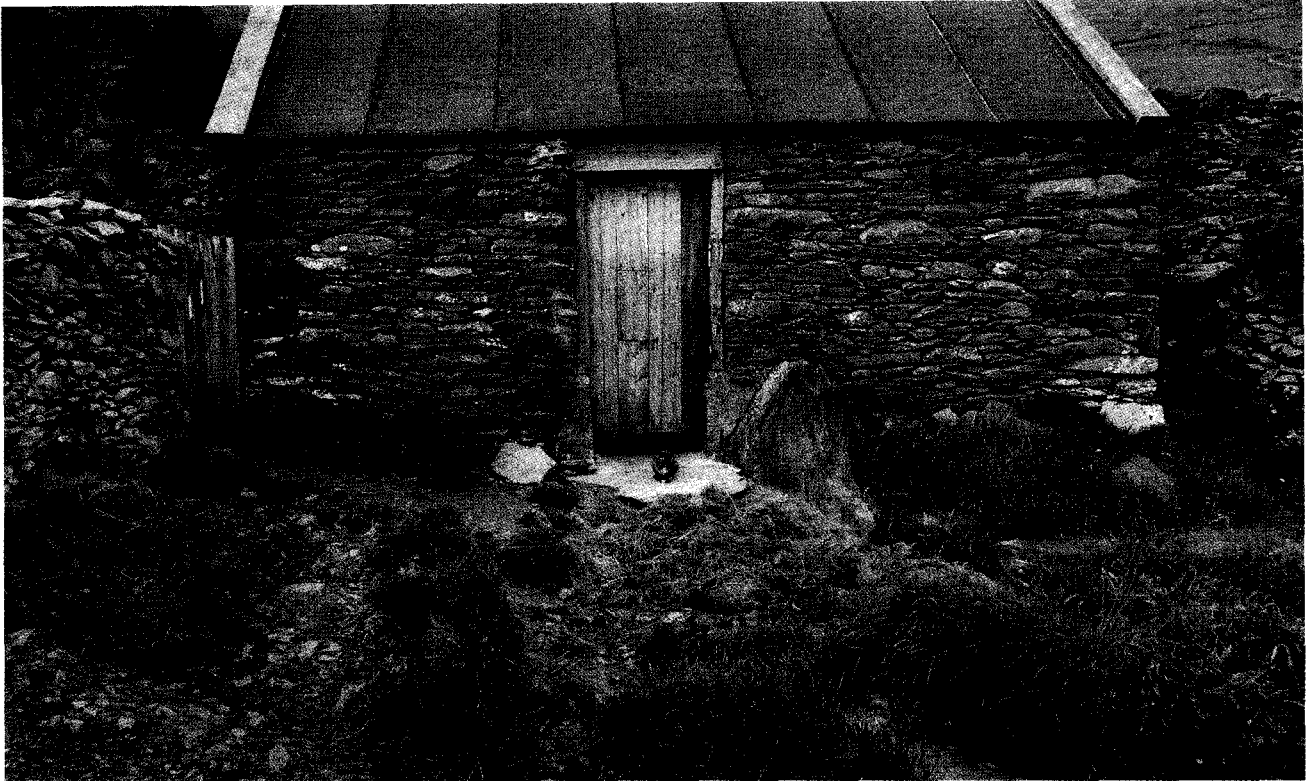
"I'm sure she will," he said. "Well, I guess—" and smiled and tilted his head toward the hill.

"Right past the Spar Market, and to the left," she said, and turned back to the shop.

"Thanks again."

"Oh," she said, "it's a yellow house." And almost at the door of the shop she turned and called, "With the Bord Fáilte sign," and waved.

Well past the turn to the Spar Market, his thighs trembling with weariness, his bladder aching, he stopped to lean against a field wall. He must have misunderstood, in the peculiar vividness of Laura in his mind, or missed a turn in the odd confusion of the village, where none of the streets were straight and everything seemed chaotic. At a picnic table in front of a pub called The American Bar a middle-aged American man had been explaining loudly to three women (sisters, maybe, their hair, glasses, concerned frowns, and Aran-knit cardigans identical) that all he could figure out was there'd been some kind of crop failure. Two very tall, very blond German men carrying towering backpacks had asked Mark directions. Three children had chased a collie dog almost into him, making him stagger. He'd walked on, slowly, but no B & B had appeared. The sun was still bright but lower, and the wind was still cold. He'd thought to ask the next



person he saw for directions, but quite abruptly all the people were gone, left behind in the center of the village with the sandwich shop and the pubs, which might have public restrooms, and here he was faced instead with two brown goats, faunlike, side by side, staring at him from the corner of the little field. Beyond them, behind a low wall, stood an abandoned house, its door and windows blocked with stones.

Like a grave, he found himself thinking, like a mausoleum, and he could feel the cold dark of it, and his fear lurched upward into his chest, and he said aloud, “No,” and the goats startled and stumbled. He would not fall apart here on the side of the road, would not spiral down into that terror, wet himself, weep—not here, not alone. He drew a deep breath and pinched the bridge of his nose. First things first: he would walk up behind that house and relieve himself. Then he would walk back down to the village and ask directions.

He walked slowly up a narrow grassy path between fields, touching the tops of the walls for balance. The goats pivoted to watch him, and he saw that their collars were fastened together. He stepped behind the house, out of view of the road and the goats. The two windows were blocked with stone, as in the front, but the wooden back door hung ajar, a rusted water trough beside it. A broken wooden chair lay in the grass, with a pale flowered rag nearby. It was only a house, a sad abandoned house, and he might have imagined its people, but a queer yodeling cry rose from beyond it, and he saw a woman with a bucket coming up across a field. If she raised her head, she’d see

him. He opened the door wider and nearly stumbled over an escaping yellow cat. “Sorry,” he whispered, and looked inside quickly—just a small room, empty but for a pile of trash and maybe the remains of a fire by the far wall—before he stepped in and pulled the door shut.

He’d expected it to be dank and dark: he hadn’t expected such fruity warmth, or so night-blue a darkness, or the illusion of stars, of being suspended among stars. It dizzied him, and he put out his hands, as if he might fall. The stones were packed tight in the front door and in the four small windows, but tiny specks of light came through: he understood what had created the illusion, but still the stars remained, and for a long moment he stood there with his arms extended, feeling the heavens whirling him slowly, gently, from the known to the unknown.

Then his eyes adjusted to the darkness and the dark grew lighter, the starry points paler; the sound of metal against stone came to him from outside, and his bladder insisted, so, apologetically, he did what he had come in to do, one hand against the warm, dry wall, his gaze elevated to the luminous shadows.

The goats and the woman were gone when he came back around the house, and as he walked down the grassy path to the road, he saw a boy trotting up the road from town. He recognized him as the tallest of the boys who’d been chasing the dog, and the boy raised his hand and called out, “Mister Driscoll, you’ve gone wrong!” grinning as he changed from his steady trot to an exaggerated imitation of exhausted effort. He looked to be about eight.

They met on the road, the boy panting elaborately. Mark smiled and said, "You're absolutely right. What's your name?"

"Oh, I'm Stephen," he said, and put out his hand. "I saw you below."

"I saw you, too. Did you catch that dog?" Stephen's warm, narrow hand reminded Mark sharply of his own sons, almost men now, grown far past this frankness.

"Ah, no," Stephen said, blushing a little. "We were just messin'."

"Well," Mark said. He understood the blush; apparently, people in the village had watched him wander away in the wrong direction. "So I'm lost, trying to find Ann Flaherty's. Can I get there from here?"

The boy didn't register the joke. "You can, of course," he said seriously.

"All right. Can you tell me where I go?"

"Will I take you?"

"You don't have to do that."

The boy's seriousness turned worried, and he rubbed his knuckles along his jaw, the gesture of some grown man. "I'm to get you sorted, Mrs. Kennedy said."

"Is that the woman at the sweater shop?"

The grin returned. "Ah, no—that's Mrs. Joyce. Mrs. Kennedy, she's—young." He pursed his lips, his eyes dancing, and Mark almost laughed.

"All right, then—you'll take me," he said. "Let's go." They walked down the side of the road.

THE PLOT THICKENS

Although Baxter

caught Daisy

encouraging Frank,

Gertrude helped

Isaac jimmy

Katy's libido;

meanwhile, Nell

offered Paul

quick relief,

sating Tina's

unblinking voyeurism

while Xavier's

yearning zoomed.

—JEFF MOCK

"I saw some goats back there," Mark said. "Their collars were hooked together. Why is that?"

"That way they won't be able to get out."

"Doesn't it keep them from eating, too?"

"Oh, no. There's not a bother on them."

"Do you have goats?"

The boy laughed. "No," he said, and after a few more strides he said, "Are you American?"

"Yep," Mark said.

"My cousins live in America," Stephen said. "In Chicago. I'll probably go there someday."

"It's quite a city."

"Maybe I'll see you there," Stephen said, grinning again.

"Maybe so," Mark said.

"That's if I don't keep up the fishing."

"Is that what your father does?"

"It is. And my brothers." He hopped in front of Mark and hopped back. "So we don't have *goats*," he said, laughing.

"I see," Mark said. "And is that the best thing about being a fisherman?" They were nearly to the village.

The boy shook his head. "My cousin Dara was drowned once. Now you go on here," he said, and stopped at a turn down what seemed to be a driveway, at the end of which a small parking lot backed a supermarket, "and then there," pointing.

"Ah—so I was supposed to go all the way *to* the Spar Market. That's where I went wrong." The sun was low, and the lane was already dusky.

"He said he saw Little Aran once."

"Your cousin?"

Stephen nodded, and narrowed his eyes at Mark, as if measuring him.

"Little Aran—is that Inisheer?"

"No, it is not," Stephen said, and his tone was so level that Mark looked him in the eye.

"Is it an island?" Mark asked carefully.

"It is," Stephen said. "A magic island."

Mark nodded slowly. "I see," he said.

The boy looked away, rubbed his jaw again, and then grinned. "Yeah—all right, then—down the left there and it's Ann Flaherty's, and you're sorted," and he turned before Mark could offer to shake his hand again, and trotted away. But then he stopped and called back, "She's not young!"

He was right: curiosity and disapproval balanced in the not-young, thin, sharp face of Ann Flaherty. She glared at his hat as she opened the door and let him in, and instead of hello she said, "She's gone off to The American Bar."

"Thank you," Mark said. If she could be abrupt, he could match her. "I'd like to see our room."

"You're sick, I'd say."

"I have been," he said.

She twisted her mouth and turned and led him down a



narrow hall to a remarkably pleasant room. Laura's scarf lay on the bed. "It's en suite," she said, pointing to a door, "and there's more blankets in there," pointing to a wardrobe.

He nodded, and picked up the scarf and folded it into a small square and put it into his coat pocket.

"It'll be cold, now the sun's gone," Ann Flaherty said, and then, grudgingly, "They've music there tonight." She wasn't young, and she wasn't pretty, but Mark could imagine the texture of her thin, dry lips against his own, and for a second he was light-headed with the temptation to touch her.

Instead he smiled and asked, "Where exactly is this American Bar from here?"

Her smile was sour and satisfied. "Up the lane and down the hill," she said.

"Thank you," he said. She turned, and he followed her back down the hall.

At the door she said, "She's got the key."

He put his hat back on. "All right," he said, and went out into the growing dusk to find his wife.

She sat alone at one of the picnic tables on the deserted lawn in front of The American Bar, looking down toward the bay, where a few boats showed small lights. Mark stood still, watching her; she raised her glass, drank, and set it down again on the table. The wind was much less now, and he could hear the murmur of talk from inside the pub. He inhaled carefully, and then walked across the rough grass to the end of her table.

"Hi," he said.

She didn't look up, but after a small pause she said, "Hi."

The island never appeared to Mark again, and he never told Laura about seeing it, or about whirling among the miraculous stars in the abandoned house. But that night, taking a seat across from her at that picnic table, as carefully as if this were some crucial moment of courtship, every gesture perilous, choices still unmade, he said, "I hear there's going to be music in there."

"So they say," she said.

He touched the scarf in his pocket and reached tentatively for her glass. She slid it toward him, and he took a sip.

"I met a kid today," he said. "He told me about this island we might want to see sometime." He passed the glass back to her and left his hand beside it, so when she took it again, her fingers brushed his.

"Where is it?"

"Pretty near here," he said. "There's seals there."

Inside the music began, a swaying fiddle.

It was nearly dark, but he could see the pale line of her jaw, and the way she lifted her chin. "I'd like to see seals," she said. "Next year we should go there."

He nodded. "That's what I thought," he said.

They shared the rest of the pint slowly, without talking, and when it was gone she shrugged her shoulders quickly and said, "It's getting cold," and he took the scarf from his pocket and held it out to her, and when she took it, he moved his fingertips softly against her palm. He watched her hold the scarf up and let it unfold, and swirl it in the dark air above her head and let it settle across her shoulders, and bend her head and lift her hair free of it. ■

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

A SECRET CARIBBEAN

Marie Galante and Les Saintes are islands that the French have been keeping for themselves

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF

.....

In my childhood, people would return from a week in the Caribbean with tales of inexpensive, elemental pleasures enjoyed in exotic but welcoming settings. That particular combination of delights, alas, hasn't been the usual synopsis of a Caribbean vacation for some years now. Elemental pleasures often command an extravagant price these days, and strips of high-rise hotels interspersed with chain restaurants strike few of us as exotic. Nonetheless, what I remember as typical from long ago I found again this past fall in the out islands of Guadeloupe: Marie Galante and the Iles des Saintes. Les Saintes consist of Terre de Haut, where the main town, the main port, a tiny airport, and most hotels, including the best one, are; Terre de Bas, also inhabited and containing a few simple guesthouses; and six uninhabited islets. Marie Galante and Terre de Haut aren't any harder for Americans to get to than, say, Nevis or Belize, but many people have never even heard of them.

No wonder: these places are secrets that the French have been keeping for themselves. Emblems of Frenchness are everywhere, from the baguettes and croissants and café au lait for breakfast to the miniature dogs on leashes or tucked under their owners' arms to the pistes laid out for pétanque, the French equivalent of bocce. Marie Galante (population 12,500) and the Iles des Saintes (population about 3,000) are little promoted to Americans as tourist destinations, and they show scant evidence of a U.S. commercial presence. In a week of driving and walking and ferrying all over these

islands, my husband, Julian, and I saw scarcely any shop signs in English and few familiar logos, apart from the yellow Hertz sign on the office in Grand Bourg, Marie Galante's largest town, where we rented a clean, air-conditioned Peugeot.

Usually at this point in the story there turns out to be a catch—say, the island lacks beaches or any semblance of a comfortable hotel. But here there is no catch, apart from the primacy of French. And on balance that works to the visitor's advantage, because along with the language come many of the qualities that so endear France itself to tourists.

For an experiment in how much of an inconvenience *francophonie* is likely to be for anglophone Americans, Julian and I probably made ideal subjects, because neither of us has mastered French beyond the Inspector Clouseau level. At the hotels where we stayed, enough bilingual people were on staff that we never had trouble communicating our needs and wishes. And when we were out exploring, the cheerful confession "*Je ne parle pas français*" generally elicited help. The French Government Tourist Office made some of the arrangements for our trip, so no doubt people in official capacities were especially solicitous of us. But—except for one woman in a car on Marie Galante who told us off because (I guess; I can only infer here) we'd been driving ahead of her too slowly—people to whom we had no introduction were charmingly solicitous too.

Marie Galante, in particular, is so unaccustomed to American visitors that most locals seemed amused by us. That

island's culture is richly spiced with Afro-Caribbean ingredients; the Iles des Saintes are more purely European, and more worldly. On Terre de Haut some people we met seemed to find our linguistic ineptness gauche, as some do in France. But there were also people like a cheerful Italian waitress at our hotel, who was equally able to converse in Italian, Spanish, French, or English—whichever we were in the mood for.

We made ourselves the subjects of another experiment, too, rigorously testing our belief that middle-class French tourists, who do much to sustain the economies of these islands, refuse to put up with bad food. Some early successes—grilled red snapper with piquant creole sauce and a carafe of chilled house rosé, savory cod fritters whose texture was like that of fresh-from-the-fryer doughnuts, a perfect tomato salad, a split lobster tail lightly buttered and smoky from the grill—went to our heads, I suppose, and soon we grew reckless. One lunchtime on Marie Galante we simply meandered down the beach with a few hundred francs (now, since the first of the year, it would be a few dozen euros) tucked into our bag, along with the beach towels and the Coca-Cola Light (locally a rare commodity, equivalent to our Diet Coke), until we happened upon a "cyber-café." We didn't bother to ask whether the seafood was fresh, so maybe we deserved what we got: tough, bony steaks of mystery fish. The salads and the fries and the cold Carib beers with lime made an ample lunch in themselves, though.

For every uninspired meal like that we had two or three or four happy surprises. The day we drove, slowly, all the way around Marie Galante, at lunchtime we came upon a tidy seaside terrace, where we ordered salad and—what the heck?—"blaff de palourdes." This turned



South of the south of France: Le Bourg, on Terre de Haut, the Iles des Saintes' most populous island

out to be succulent thin-shelled clams in a thyme-flavored broth, served with wedges of lime and slivers of fiery, Christmas-red Scotch bonnet pepper. From the road it hadn't been clear that the place was even in business: the remaining wooden letters on its stucco wall read HOTEL BAR STAURANT. Only as we left, and because I insisted on knowing, did we learn the name of the establishment. The proprietress apologized for being all out of business cards and wrote the name with her finger on my place mat as she pronounced it: Hajo.

And one dinnertime we happened on Chez Henri, in Saint Louis, Marie Galante's second city. From the street Chez Henri looks like a snug Breton bar, complete with a bored waitress hunched over a table in a wood-paneled room, reading the paper and smoking. But the waitress led us through that room into an open-air dining room and then out onto the beach, where she seated us beneath a majestic, dramatically lighted breadfruit tree. The harbor twinkled in the distance. She returned with a mosquito coil, the menu (there was only one, handwritten, for everyone to share), and a kerosene

lantern by which to read. After we placed our orders (one fish creole, one fish *colombo*, as curry is locally called), the waitress asked us what time it was. About two before eight. Well, then, Henri would be along soon. And sure enough, a few minutes later a tall, handsome black man strode in wearing an aloha shirt, made the rounds of the tables shaking hands and welcoming his guests, and then retreated to the open kitchen, where we could see him change into a spotless white T-shirt and apron and set to work cooking. His movements were precise, the results delicious, the evening magical.

What is there to do between meals? Much of the coast of Marie Galante is beaches: rent a car, drive around, stop at will. The island has a few other tourist attractions, too, all of them redolent of that more innocent age of tourism—an ocean blowhole, the ruins of some ancient sugar plantations, rum distilleries where you can take a tour (ours lasted all of three minutes) and sample the wares.

In the Iles des Saintes, Terre de Haut has eight swimming beaches—one for every day of the week plus an extra for

good measure. Between the tiny Pain de Sucre beach and the Hôtel Bois Joli, on its own beach a short distance away, is some of the best snorkeling I've found anywhere. The accommodations at the Bois Joli, unfortunately, are spartan, but the open-air bar and restaurant are pleasant enough. A walk to the Bois Joli (no rental cars are available on the island, though there are motor scooters for rent, and also vans that will take you around) combined with a swim in the sea makes a nice day's outing.

So does a visit to Terre de Bas. A little catamaran ferry with clean, white-painted wooden benches takes about fifteen minutes to deliver you from Terre de Haut to the Terre de Bas ferry dock. Here, as on Terre de Haut, you can hire a van with driver to give you a tour of the island. In either place, but especially here, hiring one is a good idea. The island may be called Bas ("Low"), but it's actually quite hilly, and if you insist on walking, you'll either exhaust yourself or miss seeing the views.

Our driver on Terre de Bas suggested that we start out by making reservations for lunch at one of the two restaurants in

the town of Grand Anse, a mile or so from the ferry dock, and he drove us past them to allow us to make our choice. We preferred the looks of A la Belle Etoile, for no reason other than that it was on the beach side of the road. The proprietor came out to take our "reservations," which turned out to consist of placing our order—we chose fish—and agreeing to return when our tour was over.

We made short work of a beautiful fresh grilled red snapper apiece, and then had perhaps an hour before our driver was to return and take us to meet the midafternoon ferry, so we wandered out the restaurant's back door onto the beach. There were picnic tables, under thatched roofs and set upon cement floors, and even a booth in which to change into a bathing suit, in a tiny municipal pavilion whose bulletin board advertised, for instance, an upcoming doubles tournament at the local pétanque club.

For a romantic vacation that keeps the traveling to a minimum, your best bet would be to settle in at the Auberge Les Petits Saints aux Anacardiens, high on a hill overlooking the harbor of Le Bourg, the only town on Terre de Haut. The view is gorgeous, across the water to little Ilet à Cabrit and, beyond, to the green hills and sparkling lights of Guadeloupe. The hotel itself, with ten rooms tucked into the main house and a couple of cottages around a swimming pool, is an over-the-top fantasy of tropical languor, crammed full of the antiques and handcrafted furnishings that the owners, Didier Spindler and Jean-Paul Colas, bring back from their frequent trips to other Caribbean islands, France, and Asia. The food served at dinner (and cooked by the jovial French husband of that Italian waitress) is widely acknowledged to be the most ambitious and best on the island. No doubt, though, some evenings you'll want to head into the heart of town and try the more traditional Caribbean fare available there.

It was when Julian and I went for a stroll one evening after dinner at the Auberge that we fell under the spell of Le Bourg. Immediately a little ginger cat appointed itself to be our guide, trotting ahead of or behind us as we made our way downhill along paved alleyways



Pain de Sucre, on Terre de Haut, and in the distance Ilet à Cabrit

between yards spilling over with flowers; through a brightly lit square where a few people sat on the benches, talking quietly; past a fenced lot containing goats, which had bedded down for the night. Later I told Jean-Paul about our walk, explaining that Le Bourg reminded me of nothing so much as the French villages that Julian and I had explored in the evenings one summer when we took a barge cruise in Champagne country. Jean-Paul nodded knowingly. "Here you can go for a walk at three in the morning and you feel the people sleeping around you," he said. "It always feels safe."

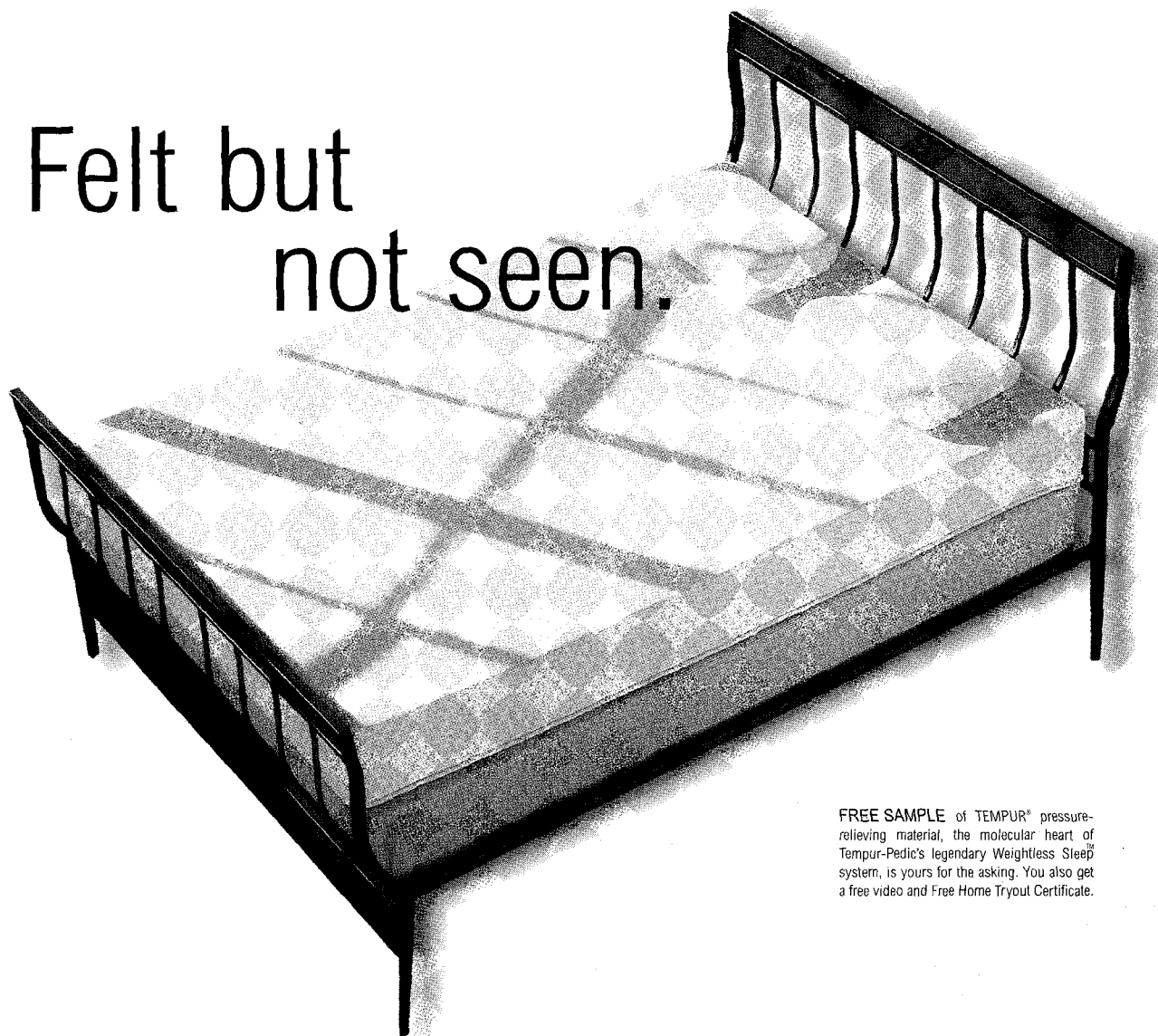
Nonetheless, if it's a family vacation you want, the ideal place might be La Cohoba Hôtel, on Marie Galante. This is a modern, 100-room resort adjacent to, though not quite on, the beach; a rickety gate and a hundred feet of rain forest separate the grounds from the beach and the water-sports kiosk. Our bungalow was intriguingly French, with the toilet in a separate cubicle from the shower and sink; the blue, yellow, and white color scheme characteristic of French seaside resorts; sleek wooden furniture; and built-in reading lights on both sides of the queen-sized bed. A child or two could have slept in the separate living room, and the air-conditioning was heavenly. The one negative was that outside our airtight bungalow we encountered more biting insects than we ordinarily enjoy spending time with. I

was told that this was an unusual consequence of recent rains—but take insect repellent and something to cover you up lightly but completely at dinner, just in case. (And here's a handy tip: use water in the shower or a hair dryer, like the one that's to be found in your bathroom at La Cohoba, to heat a fresh mosquito bite just enough that your skin smarts; the heat will denature the toxin, and the bite will itch no more.) La Cohoba has a fine restaurant, a bar, a big swimming pool, two tennis courts, a volleyball court, billiards, foosball, water-sports equipment, a pétanque piste—what more could anyone want? Well, maybe that rental car, to get out and explore the island, admire the blowhole, and make your way to Saint Louis one night a little before eight, to await Henri. ▀

Information about Marie Galante and Les Saintes is available on the Web sites www.ot-mariegalante.com and www.les-saintes-direct.com. At the Auberge Les Petits Saints aux Anacardiens rates for a double room with bath and Continental breakfast range from about \$80 to \$165 a night in high season, and from \$60 to \$135 in low; phone 011-590-99-54-55 or e-mail petitssaints@yahoo.fr. At La Cohoba Hôtel rates for a bungalow (the middle of three categories of rooms) for two, with a substantial buffet breakfast included, start at \$115 a night in high season, \$85 in low; phone 011-590-97-50-50 or e-mail cohoba@leaderhotels.gp. It's easy to fly (we traveled on American and American Eagle) to Guadeloupe, and from there to fly or travel by ferry to either Marie Galante or Terre de Haut; the ferry ride costs about \$14 and takes less than an hour. In season daily ferries run between Marie Galante and Terre de Haut; at any time of the year one can otherwise travel between the two islands by chartering a plane or taking a ferry into Guadeloupe and another back out again.

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EARLY RISER

The joy of getting out of bed and down to work

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

.....

Talking to a friend not long ago, I paraphrased a remark of Einstein's: "Only a monomaniac gets anything done." "No," replied my friend, "only people who get up at five A.M. get anything done." I happen to be both a monomaniac and a five o'clock riser, so why, I wonder, do I continue to feel so slothful? Before attempting to answer, let me say that though I'm not someone who bounds out of bed like a wide receiver

breaking from a Notre Dame huddle, I do look forward to getting up early. I like the darkness, I like the silence, I like the company I encounter at that hour—which is to say, I enjoy the hour or so of solitude. And as a grateful pessimist, I like the fact that I have made it—still alive!—through another night.

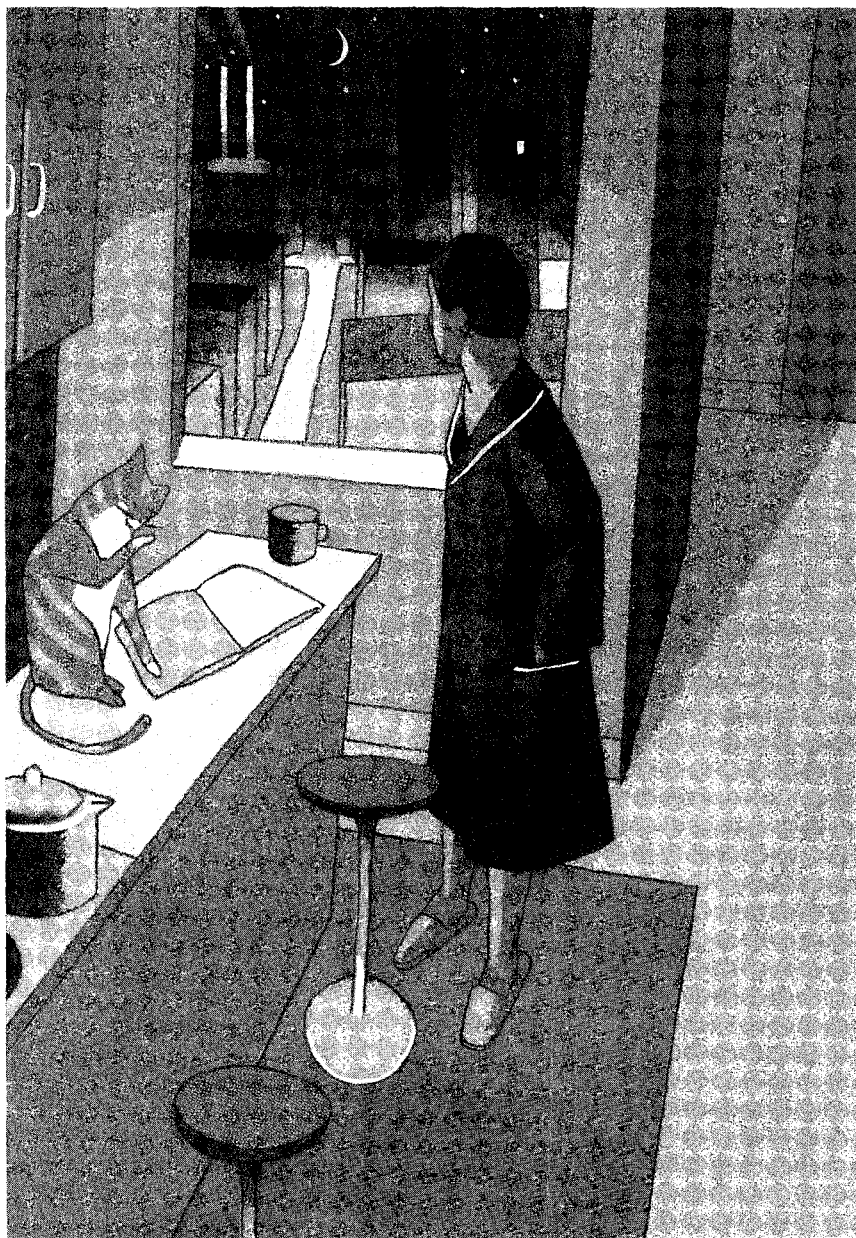
I also immensely like my morning regimen. I turn on the stove under the tea kettle, fill the tea ball (alternating

Assam Extra Fancy one morning with Irish Breakfast the next), and await the whistle of the kettle while I make out a list of the day's errands, meetings, and responsibilities. Then I sit on a high stool at the kitchen counter and read, more often than not from some thickish book having to do with something I have promised to write. I sip tea, I take notes on my reading, I await the sunrise.

Sometimes I am accompanied by music from WFMT, Chicago's last remaining and splendid classical-music station, though I turn it off if the music becomes too dramatic, thereby interfering with my reading and my sense of a day's calm beginning (not much Beethoven, no Wagner, and scant Richard Strauss permitted at this early hour). I hope no one will think me nauseatingly sensitive if I add that I used to be joined by a striped cat, now dead, named Isabelle, who, after I fed her, sat beside my book, always on my left, demanding no attention, content to be nearby and to look elegant. During baseball season I turn on an AM station at 5:13 to get the previous night's scores and, while I'm at it, the weather. No phone rings; I generally do not turn on my computer, allowing e-mail, and hence the outside world, to invade my morning. For the same reason, I wait until 6:30 or so to go to the door for *The New York Times*, in which I turn first to the obituaries to see who has been taken out of the game. I could still be sleeping—a pleasure I do not slight—but I really am happier awake.

I am happier awake because I am a man who has long been on a schedule. What put me on this schedule I do not know, but on it I have been for most of my adult life. I waste money, food, energy, and doubtless much else, all fairly lightheartedly, but I do have a bad conscience about wasting time. Not that I don't waste plenty of time, too, gassing away on the phone with friends, looking for excuses to take me away from my work, indulging in magazine-reading binges, taking long lunches. But wasting time abed I cannot do. If I sleep as late as seven o'clock, even on a weekend, I feel the day is lost.

As for this unwritten schedule, I'm



HERVÉ BLONDIN

not, please believe me, madly intent on achievement, keen to produce fifty books before I die or determined to earn 20 percent more this year—every year—than last. I'm not in competition with anyone, living or dead. My schedule is entirely self-imposed. It calls for my getting something useful done every day, and useful, for me, means writing two or three or—if the planets are in perfect alignment—four or five decent pages. When I read years ago that Thomas Mann, a prodigious—and famously slow—worker, settled for a page a day, this *petit* Chicago *bourgeois* was much impressed by that *haute* Baltic German one. Of course a page a day, knocking off only on Sundays, means a respectable-sized book a year.

I began getting up early not because of conscience or because of the intrinsic pleasures that doing so has subsequently come to give but because, as a man then in my middle twenties, married, with a house full of children, dogs, cats, and other livestock, and working at a full-time job, I found that was the only time I could get any writing done. So I began waking up at 5:00 A.M. After splashing cool water on my face and revving myself up with coffee and cigarettes (in those days not yet considered death in the afternoon), I staggered over to my old Royal Standard and began tapping away.

Getting up at five wasn't all that easy at first. On cold Chicago mornings I kept my psychic furnace stoked with guilt. Having struggled to get up, and having then accomplished little, left me feeling stupid to a very high power. I would tell myself that I hadn't hauled my carcass out of bed to write one wretched and ill-made paragraph: Concentrate, type, form words into sentences, remember that sentences make paragraphs and paragraphs pages—keep things moving, kid. Self-scolding in those days worked well for me. No longer, I fear; nowadays I have only shame to spur me on.

Up to the age of twenty-five or so, I was susceptible to neither. From my late adolescence through my early twenties my weekend *modus operandi* was to come in at around five in the

morning and sleep heavily till three or so in the afternoon. Dreams when I was young seemed richer, less complicated; they were more about the future than the past, about promise rather than loss. One quarter at the University of Chicago when I had only morning classes, I stayed up nights and slept days all week long, which worked out beautifully, providing lots of time to get schoolwork done along with reading of my own and ample goofing off. When young, I could bounce back quickly after a poor night's sleep or a full night's revels; the elastic wasn't yet worn out. Now I feel I almost need to go into training just to get a decent day's work done.

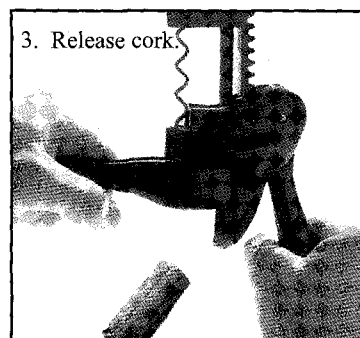
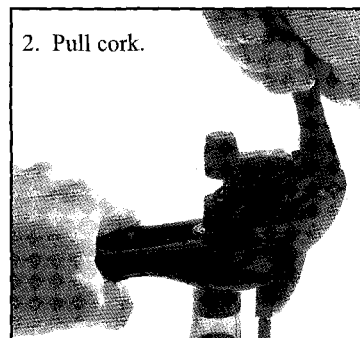
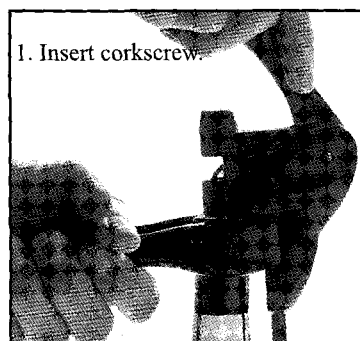
"Beddy-bye," W. H. Auden used to say to his hosts at 9:30 P.M., or to his guests when he was the host, for he was a 6:00 A.M. riser and required a full night's sleep for a full day's wrestle with language at his cigarette-ash-laden and untidy desk. Auden never wrote at night, believing, as he told his friend Orlan Fox, that "only the 'Hitlers of the world' work at night; no honest artist does." Not quite true. The novelist John O'Hara claimed later in life that he got to work only after the last television show was over. Balzac worked through many a night, nicely wired by vast quantities of coffee. Edmund Wilson, on the other hand, according to his daughter's testimony, used to stay up late at night drinking and then trudge off to bed with a full tumbler of Scotch, but most mornings he showed up at his desk ready for a full case-load of literary judgments.

By 9:30 P.M. put a fork in me, I'm done. I try to be in bed by ten. Sometimes, I'm told, the forms that match-making services ask their clients to fill out include a question about whether they are morning or night persons—a sensible query. Fortunately, my wife is on roughly the same timetable as I, sleeping only an hour or so later most mornings. The mornings after nights that we stay out late feel like a punishment—that damn elastic again.

I used to joke that as I grew older, the minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, continued to feel as long as ever; it was only the decades that passed more quickly. But now the days have begun

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to seem shorter. FedEx, e-mail, Internet downloading, and much else are supposed to be saving us vast quantities of time. I think they've only heightened expectations for a faster response. With all these marvelous conveniences added, the load somehow seems heavier. Where once people fell behind in their correspondence, now they can't keep up with their e-mail, while still owing letters.

Living the good life as a member of the so-called enlightened classes (or are we by now the masses?) entails some form of working out, careful shopping and cooking, keeping up with high and popular culture through watching the right movies, listening to the right music, reading the right books, traveling to the right places. Let us not speak of the relatively new expectations regarding fatherhood and motherhood, wifehood and husbandhood. Anyone who attempts to do everything on the list in a thorough way had better block out another few hours a week for visits with a therapist. One of the chief reasons that I—quite possibly along with you—feel slothful is that our greatly sped-up life, with all its new conveniences, has raised my expectations, has led me to think that I ought to be turning out much more work than I do, has left me to feel at the end of so many days that I ought to have done better.

But at 5:00 A.M., waiting for the kettle to boil, contemplating the book before me, with thoughts floating lazily in my head, it gives serious—I only wish I could say abiding—pleasure to know that I still have three or so hours before having to get, even in my mildly engaged way, into the fray. One of the reasons that nineteenth-century writers and intellectuals and scientists seem to have gotten so much done—monstrous oeuvres of novels, poems, diaries; thousands of letters; scientific exploration and widely varied experimentation in two or three fields—is that they didn't have all the conveniences we do. For "conveniences," of course, one might read "distractions." Many of those people must have felt as if they were living their lives at 5:00 A.M. all day long. Lucky them. ▀

MOORE'S STONE CRAB*Restaurants worth building a trip around*

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Just as a summer trip to Maine must involve lobster eaten by the water, a winter trip to Florida should include stone crab—a lesser-known cousin of the Maine lobster and the Maryland blue crab that has equally devoted fans. One reason is that it tastes like a cross between the two. Another is that it's easier to eat—all you get is the big, meaty claw, which has usually been cracked for easy pickings. The meat is firm, with a flavor less authoritative than lobster's but more distinctive than blue crab's. Like lobsters, stone crabs are boiled in plain water—no secret spice mix, as for Maryland crab and Louisiana crawfish.

Waterside eating is mandatory with all these state specialties, not just for charm but for flavor. Stone crab, which is fished in the Gulf of Mexico as far west as Texas and on the Atlantic coast as far north as North Carolina, travels perhaps the least well of all crustaceans. By law it can't be shipped fresh, because it spoils too fast, so it is always first cooked and then chilled so that the meat will not stick to the shell; it can't be frozen, because the meat will be dry and stringy when defrosted. Florida, the capital of the stone-crab trade, ships thousands of pounds of cooked claws during the fishing season, from October 15 to May 15. Shipping may help the state fishery and spread the fame of stone crab. But the claws are really worth eating only when a fisherman has just delivered a few buckets of them to the kitchen.

The usual Florida pilgrimage is to Joe's Stone Crab, in south Miami Beach, which made stone crab famous in the 1920s and is still run by the family that founded it. Joe's has a raffish, late-1940s feel, and when visiting Miami, I always make sure to get in line for a table. But on a trip to Sarasota last February, I discovered a yet better place to eat stone crab—smaller and more intimate but

equally full of Florida character, and right on the water.

Moore's Stone Crab has its own long dock in a fishing village at the end of Longboat Key that still looks like a fishing village, or at least like a place where people work for a living—something rare in a resort populated almost entirely by retirees and tourists. The modest clapboard houses are painted in non-cloying pastels; many are on stilts, to withstand hurricane waves.

Moore's says it is the oldest seafood restaurant in Manatee County that is still under original ownership, and it has certainly made itself a stop on the Florida trail. A long line of families generally appears before the 11:30 opening. During crab season the restaurant serves straight through until 9:30, and the dining room, with its picture windows overlooking the dock and the mangrove-covered islands beyond, is seldom empty. Waiting here is pleasurable, because the dock is next to a beach popular with egrets, herons, and pelicans.

Moore's treats its landmark status with tongue in cheek, selling only a few souvenirs (mugs, T-shirts, baseball caps) with its appealingly clunky red stone-crab logo, and keeping the staff's attitude friendly and outgoing without being cute. The tone is set by the owners—Paul and Alan Moore, who grew up working at the restaurant, and Robert Hicks, a bluff and friendly man who often greets guests, and who calls himself the illegitimate son of the family. Hicks began working here as a dishwasher in 1967, at age fifteen, soon after Paul and Alan Moore, whose family had been fishing stone crab since the 1920s, opened the restaurant as a way to earn for themselves the profits that had been going to middlemen.

The fishermen who supply the restaurant with its stone crab also deliver the three local fish that are always on

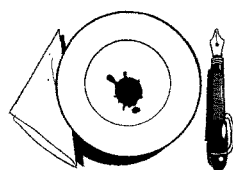
the menu: snapper, sole-like and delicate, often to the point of blandness; grouper, with a richer flavor reminiscent of cod's; and pompano, which has the finest flavor of the three. Moore's serves the fish grilled, broiled, deep-fried, sautéed with butter and bread crumbs, or blackened. These relatively fragile white fish are to my mind best broiled, without the char of grilling or the spice of blackening, both of which usually compensate for deficient flavor.

Most popular are of course stone-crab platters, which are presented simply—just claws on a white oval crockery plate, with two side dishes and butter or mustard sauce (there's cocktail sauce already on the table). I chose the "house" dinner, with a pound and a quarter of crab claws (six to eight), and looked on in amazement at the passing "jumbo" dinners—two and a quarter pounds of the biggest-grade claws ("These are big, trust me," says the restaurant's Web site). Hicks told me that the restaurant sells at least 300 house dinners and seventy-five jumbos a day.

I didn't have room for either of the side dishes I ordered with the crab platters: homemade coleslaw and Caesar salad. These usually go uneaten, according to Hicks. I did try the Key-lime pie, a fine rendition even if (like all its kin) disappointingly heavy on the sweetened condensed milk and light on the acidic Key West lime. I watched with similar surprise the many huge slices of "Charlie Brown," a brownie and peanut-butter layer cake that makes a big hit with kids, going by.

When I returned the next day, I ordered another house dinner. Only embarrassment (the same waitress had taken my order the evening before) prevented me from ordering a jumbo. As I dug into the far reaches of the claws, gluttony overtook me—familiar from a once-a-summer Maine dinner at which a generous hostess serves as many lobsters from the nearby dock as my family and I can eat. Stone crabs are less salty. You can eat an alarming quantity of them, no matter how big. Trust me. ▀

Moore's Stone Crab Restaurant, 800 Broadway Street, Longboat Key, Florida, 941-383-1748. Open seven days, 11:30–9:30 from October 15 to May 1; Monday–Friday 4:30–9:30 and weekends 11:30–9:30 from May 1 to October 15. Major credit cards accepted.



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A TERRIFYING HONESTY

V. S. Naipaul is certainly no liberal—and herein lies his importance

BY GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

.....

A group of eminent American writers appointed by the Librarian of Congress—including W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, and Robert Lowell—awarded the 1948 Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound, for *The Pisan Cantos*. Because Pound had spent the war broadcasting propaganda for Mussolini, and was at the time in a mental hospital, having been judged unfit to stand trial for treason, the award not surprisingly caused a storm of protest, even though the judges insisted that they had taken as their guiding principle only “that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest,” and denied that their decision had any political significance. Dwight Macdonald disagreed: the award *was* political, not to say “the brightest political act in a dark period,” precisely because the judges had rebuked totalitarianism, whose worst horror is that it “reduces the individual to one aspect, the political ... and I think we can take some pride as Americans in having as yet preserved a society free and ‘open’ enough for it to happen.”

That came to my mind in October, when the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to V. S. Naipaul. Like the Bollingen judges, the Swedish prize committee would have liked it to be known that their award was nonpolitical; and some critics praised them for precisely that, in a back-handed way. Too often it has felt as though extraliterary factors weighed with the Nobel, if only in the form of a geographical balancing act (last year it was Eastern Europe, this year it must be Latin America). In the shadow of September 11,

the award to Naipaul seemed, as it were, willfully politically incorrect. As Philip Hensher wrote in the course of a subtle encomium, “If ever there was a moment when external considerations might have discouraged the Nobel committee from rewarding the author of *Among the Believers*, that magnificently disdainful journey through Islam, this is it.”

Maybe so. And yet I believe that this Nobel Prize does indeed have a political significance, and is even, in its way, a bright political act in a dark period. “As is well known,” Macdonald wrote, “Pound’s situation is disreputable and hopeless to a dramatic degree.” As is well known, Naipaul’s reputation is checkered and increasingly uneasy. He has been called a reactionary and an Islamophobe; Derek Walcott has accused him, more in sorrow than in anger, of racism; Edward W. Said has accused him, more in anger than in sorrow, of intellectual neo-colonialism. Rather than nervously ignoring these charges, I should like to address them head on, and to say that Naipaul *is* a political figure—indeed, a profoundly important one.

Of course, he is in the first place a great imaginative writer, as certainly as we can ever know that of a contemporary. There is a case for saying that all literary prizes are foolishness (except when you win one, as more than one writer has observed), and that the only judgment that matters, apart from the commercial judgment of the market, is the critical judgment of the happy few who know how to read. And this prize has an awfully patchy record: is there anyone alive, even among French Department Ph.D.s,

who has read Sully Prudhomme, the winner of the first Nobel in literature? Or who can tell us much about Karl Adolph Gjellerup, awarded the 1917 prize “for his varied and rich poetry, which is inspired by lofty ideals”?

This time they got it right. Naipaul is a magnificent novelist, who would have deserved the prize if he had written nothing apart from *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), *A Bend in the River* (1979), and *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987). A very long disquisition could be written on his achievement in fiction, from the comedic brilliance of the early works set in his native Trinidad to the growing formal mastery displayed by his later novels, demonstrating a fecundity, an originality, and an extraordinary technical daring that have been insufficiently recognized, partly because Naipaul is (to use what for academic critics is a damning word) so readable. His work exemplifies the art that conceals art, and he is one of the greatest living craftsmen of English prose, perhaps the very greatest—something that was spotted early on. “Mr Naipaul is an ‘East’ Indian Trinidadian with an exquisite mastery of the English language which should put to shame his British contemporaries,” Evelyn Waugh wrote of *The Middle Passage* in 1962.

But Naipaul is more than merely a great stylist and storyteller. Waugh also said that every writer must at some stage in his life decide whether he is going to be an aesthete or a prophet. He meant that too many gifted writers set themselves up as purveyors of an overt message, political, moral, sexual as it might be, with gravely deleterious results; examples over the past century are too many and obvious to list. Naipaul is both: a true aesthete and a true prophet. Or, it might be better to say, a true seer, not less so—maybe all the more so—for being such an unpopular one.



To take the charges on the rap sheet: Walcott has said that Naipaul “does not like Negroes,” and I don’t think that this can be easily dismissed. Naipaul’s family origins lie in the great nineteenth-century diaspora from Gangetic India, which distributed Indians around the British Empire—to Natal and Fiji, Kenya and Guyana, Malaya and Trinidad—as indentured laborers. There has been recurrent social and political tension between Trinidad’s two largest communities, the Indian and the black, or Afro-Caribbean. Naipaul grew up with one community calling the other “niggers” and being called “coolies” in return, and he is infected by an ancestral communal resentment such as can be found among even educated Catholics and Protestants in Ulster, or enlightened Israelis and Palestinians.

It would have been nice if, at least for public purposes, he could have shed

that atavistic distaste, but Vidia Naipaul doesn’t do nice. Perhaps one should emphasize here that he has gone out of his way, from time to time and far beyond the call of duty, to burnish his reputation as a cantankerous curmudgeon—truly the Evelyn Waugh of our age, right down to his squirearchal residence in the west of England—or even as a bigoted old barroom kvetch. Not long ago Naipaul anathematized Tony Blair as a “pirate” at the head of “a socialist revolution” (something that has escaped many on the left in England), a man who was “destroying the idea of civilization in this country” and had created “a plebeian culture.”

Nor is he ever going to be offered a job in the gay-studies faculty. Last year he pronounced E. M. Forster an odious fraud and *A Passage to India* “a pretense” and “utter rubbish,” adding that he particularly dislikes both Forster and his

friend John Maynard Keynes because of their homosexuality. In his bizarre view, Forster went to India to exploit the poor sexually, and Keynes “exploited people in the university; he sodomized them and they were too frightened to do anything about it.” Naipaul said, “I know it ought to be liberally wonderful to say it’s okay, but I think it’s awful.” Oh, well. We should by now have gotten over the adolescent idea that great creative artists are necessarily lovable people with heart-warming opinions, and I mention those obnoxious outbursts to make it clear that this is not an attempt at white-washing. Nadine Gordimer said to me once in Johannesburg, “Vidia’s trouble is that he’s got one skin too few,” which is almost a charitable way of describing his prickliness.

The accusation that he is hostile to Islam, which is the most sensitive at present, may funnily enough be the least fair—or may say more about those who make it than about Naipaul. It’s true that the charge has stuck to the point where, after his award, he felt obliged to submit himself to formal interrogation in *The New York Times* over allegations of “insensitivity and pandering to Western prejudices in your writings about Islam.” The interview includes a wondrous vaudeville exchange—“You have described the Taliban as vermin.” “No, that’s my wife!”—before Naipaul goes on, with what may be thought some intellectual courage, to say of September 11, “Religious hate, religious motivation was the primary thing. I don’t think it was because of American foreign policy.”

And yet to re-read his magisterial sequence of nonfiction narratives—which so grandly complement his novels, and for which the limp phrase “travel writing” is so completely inadequate—is to be struck by Naipaul’s ceaseless and open-minded curiosity about other people, Muslims not least. “I travel to discover other states of mind,” he wrote in “The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro,” a sharp little slice of reportage in *Finding the Centre* (1984), and it’s true. As one who writes intermittently for popular newspapers, I’ve sometimes thought that Naipaul could have been a great tabloid journalist, with his love of anecdote, color, and “human interest.”

Things started to go wrong when Naipaul embarked on those superb nonfiction narratives with *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), and then the magnificently bleak fictional treatment of Africa in *A Bend in the River*. His early Trinidadian novels had delighted English booklovers (I use the old-fashioned term deliberately) and had been showered with prizes. He could have stuck to that vein, with books that not only were exquisitely funny but also, conveniently enough, could later have been appropriated by campus exponents of what wasn't then called colonial discourse. And then came the book that really marked the turnabout in Naipaul's reputation, *Among the Believers* (1981).

It was this development—this great journey of global exploration and self-exploration—that so bitterly disappointed Said, who had much approved of “the early Naipaul” (my emphasis). But then his “compromised colonial situation” made him ideal to address “an implied audience of disenchanted Western liberals,” so that he could be cited “as an exemplary figure from the Third World who can always be relied on to tell the truth about it.” In still more venomous words Said called Naipaul a “scavenger” and a “native informer.” Naipaul ended by producing work that “successfully dramatizes an ideological position in the West from which it is possible to indict the post-colonial states for having succeeded unconditionally in gaining independence.” As often with Said, I think I can just about decrypt that sentence, and will add only this: you don't have to be a neo-conservative, or a paleo-imperialist, to see that decolonization over the past forty years has been a tragic failure in many lands; that the victims of that tragedy have been those who live there, rather than complacent Western academics; and that the first step away from the wreckage, and toward true liberation, is to abandon evasion and denial. Naipaul is a good place to start.

Needless to say, *Among the Believers* makes Said shudder. But isn't he being obtuse? That amazing book might perhaps be called “magnificently disdainful,” and it is certainly quizzical and sardonic—but it is not contemptuous. To re-read it

is also to wonder about Naipaul's reputation as a Muslim-basher and, more generally, as a misanthrope. “The longer I live the more convinced I become that one of the greatest honors we can confer on other people is to see them as they are, to recognize not only that they exist, but that they exist in specific ways and have specific realities.” Those were the words not of Vidia but of Shiva Naipaul, his younger brother by thirteen years, who followed Vidia's path to Oxford, London, fiction, and travel narrative before his miserably untimely death. (I should say that it's impossible for me to write the name Naipaul with detachment. Although I have met Sir Vidia, I would never claim to know him. But Shiva was one of my dearest friends; I miss him still, and I cannot read the dedication of *The Enigma of Arrival*—“In loving memory of my brother Shiva Naipaul 25 February 1945, Port of Spain–13 August 1985, London”—without emotion.) And yet those words—“they exist in specific ways and have specific realities”—could have been the elder brother's motto also. V. S. Naipaul says that he travels out of a need for intellectual adventure partly dictated by his colonial background, and that his is “a writer's curiosity rather than an ethnographer's or journalist's.” That is almost too modest: *Among the Believers* also shows what a wonderful reporter Naipaul is when it comes to specific realities. On second thought, never mind the tabs; he could have been a great serious journalist. Take the passage in which he described the origins and subsequent fate of Pakistan.

The idea was put forward in 1930 by a revered poet, Sir Mohammed Iqbal ...

Iqbal's argument was like this. Islam is not only an ethical ideal; it is also a “certain kind of polity.” Religion for a Muslim is not a matter of private conscience or private practice, as Christianity can be for the man in Europe. There never was, Iqbal says, a specifically Christian polity; and in Europe after Luther the “universal ethics of Jesus” was “displaced by national systems of ethics and polity.” There cannot be a Luther in Islam because there is no Islamic church-order for a Muslim to revolt against ...

To accept Islam is to accept certain “legal concepts” ... “The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically re-

lated to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the other. Therefore, the construction of a polity on national lines, if it means a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a Muslim.”

Iqbal, in fact, is saying in a philosophical way that in an undivided India Islam will be in danger, will go the way of Christianity in Europe and cease to be itself. Muslims, to be true to Islam, need a Muslim polity, a Muslim state ...

Seventeen years later (and nine years after Iqbal's death) it happened—and to the Muslim-majority northwest was added the Muslim-majority eastern half of Bengal, a thousand miles away. But that Muslim state came with a communal holocaust on both sides of the new borders. Millions were killed and many millions uprooted.

But then, having given this lucid and completely fair exposition of the rationale for Pakistan, Naipaul went on to point out that it “had a simple, terrible flaw.” Even with the frightful communal flight, and the massacres of 1947, a great number of Muslims remained in India (today around 120 million, making it the world's second largest Muslim country), and they included the most experienced politically. Without them, the new state languished—or, rather, “only the armed forces flourished,” becoming “masters, a country within a country.” It was the military that drove the eastern, Bengali fraction of the original two-part Pakistan into secession as Bangladesh, after which “calamity was added to calamity.”

The state withered. But faith didn't. Failure only led back to the faith ... If the state failed, it wasn't because the dream was flawed, or the faith flawed; it could only be because men had failed the faith. A purer and purer faith began to be called for.

But wasn't the original theocratic vision, Naipaul asked, where the failure began?

Wouldn't it have been better if the creation of Pakistan had been seen as a political achievement, something to build on, rather than as a victory of the faith, something complete in itself? ... Wouldn't it have been better for Muslims to trust less to the saving faith and to sit down hard-headedly to work out institutions?

I cite this passage at length because it is one of the best "op-eds" I have ever read, political and historical analysis of a very high order that leaves the rest of us workaday commentators looking puny. If you had read nothing written since September 11 and only Naipaul's books, you would surely be the wiser. *Failure only led back to the faith.* That is the constant theme of his writings on Islam—informed by the intense affinity for defeat and disappointment that runs through all his books, whether embodied by an individual like Mr. Biswas or by the poor of India experiencing "the old internal cruelty of that poverty: people at the bottom, full of emotion, with no politics at that moment, just rejecting rejection." Striving as we all piously are to view our fellow beings in the "House of Islam," and elsewhere in the Third World, with comprehension and sympathy, can anyone doubt that this is the key?

That leads to the larger and graver political charge: Naipaul is not just a Muslim-basher and a neo-colonialist, he *might even be right-wing*. His devotees shy away at this point. Ian Buruma is one of the best literary (as well as political) writers around today, and he has written admirably about Naipaul, who, he insists in a palpably defensive way, is not a reactionary. Well, maybe not, though it's curious how difficult it is to say of a great writer "Yes, he's a reactionary, and what of it?" even when that is obviously true, for example of Conrad, to whom Naipaul is inevitably and rightly compared. Perhaps Naipaul isn't a reactionary—but he is certainly no liberal, and herein lies his importance.

"Liberal" has more than one sense, the first really rather trivial. In American parlance the word has come to mean "progressive," or "leftish," and also what we now call politically correct and multi-cultural. Plainly, Naipaul has done everything he can to make himself unpopular in the circles where those definitions apply, and his reflections on Forster and Keynes are never going to be reprinted enthusiastically by *The Nation*. But the word has another, much deeper and more interesting sense: the sense in which almost all

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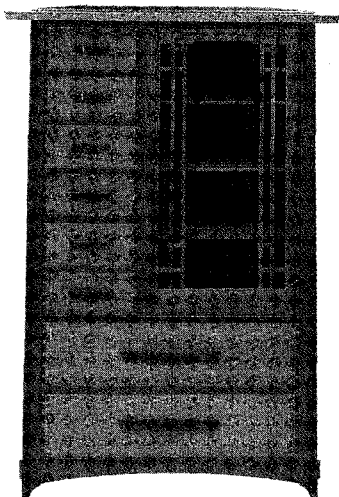
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Americans are liberals, even those neo-cons who use the very name as a curse.

That's to say, Americans believe in an open society, in material progress, in individual fulfillment, in the pursuit of happiness. You believe in that. So do I. A large part of mankind does not, and it takes an event like September 11 to remind us of this. Or it takes a certain kind of literary genius, who sees through the shallowness of our optimistic-hedonistic-liberal outlook. Naipaul is not the Osama bin Laden of letters, but he understands profoundly that life is an arduous and tragic struggle with more to endure than to enjoy, as Samuel Johnson said. He understands profoundly Rudyard Kipling's kind of conservatism, as brilliantly summarized by Waugh.

He believed civilization to be something laboriously achieved which was only precariously defended. He wanted to see the defenses fully manned and he hated the liberals because he thought them gullible and feeble, believing in the easy perfectibility of man and ready to abandon the work of centuries for sentimental qualms.

It has been said that the real purpose of conservatism is to keep liberals honest, and the purpose of pessimistic anti-liberal writers is to tell us that life is not so simple and so benign as we would like to assume.

An illustrious line of such writers—Conrad, Kipling, Waugh—have Naipaul as their great heir. And I would add another, unlikely name to the list. George Orwell was in his own eyes a man of the left, but he used to point out that conservative pessimists had more opportunities than others to say "I told you so," because most schemes for human betterment do in fact go wrong. And he saw something else. In 1940 Orwell wrote a passage that flashed into my mind after September 11, about Hitler and his "pathetic, doglike face, of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs." In still more extraordinary words he went on to say that Hitler had "grasped the falsity of the hedonistic attitude to life."

All "progressive" thought has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain ... Hitler, because in his joyless mind he feels it with

exceptional strength, knows that human beings *don't* only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty-parades. However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life.

Bin Laden may not have a pathetic, doglike face, but hasn't he—because in his joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength—grasped the same thing Hitler did? Doesn't he laugh in the face of the pursuit of happiness? And isn't that understood by Naipaul, who could almost, *mutatis mutandis*, have written that passage of Orwell's?

He did write several other frighteningly acute passages in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), his third and in many ways mellowest book about his ancestral land. He cast his cool eye on the Dravidian Progressive Movement; on the Hindu fundamentalism of Shiv Sena, which is scarcely less alarming to Western eyes than the Muslim variety and which he views no less sharply; on a Bengali Communist who said grimly that "of the many ideals of Gandhi which the Indians didn't accept, *ahimsa*, non-violence stands out." And yet, although Naipaul may not love these people, he does not despise them. And for all his fastidiousness, which made him initially recoil from "the India of poverty and an abjectness too fearful to imagine," from a place "where the threat was of chaos and the void," I do not think he despises, as opposed to pities, the post-colonial world. After all, one other advantage the anti-liberal pessimist has is that he accepts the world as it is rather than as it might be.

Whether that will do Naipaul any good is another matter. By recognizing that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest, the Nobel Prize committee honored itself last October as much as it honored V. S. Naipaul. By recognizing truths the rest of us would prefer to avoid, Naipaul has put himself at an angle to that civilized society. He continues to walk alone, anything but "liberally wonderful," and yet wonderfully, terrifyingly honest. ■



BOOKS

WILLIAM KENNEDY'S GREATEST GAME

Roscoe has a lyricism and a gusto rarely achieved in serious American novels about politics

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

One can only imagine what secret pleasure Michael Dukakis took from the defeat of Mark Green in New York's recent mayoral race. Another overage whiz kid who gives brains a bad

name, Green ran a campaign of such spectacular, extended ineptitude that he has made Dukakis seem, in memory, a kind of FDR. Even with his five-to-one Democratic advantage in

voter registration, the unlamented Green—labeled “obnoxious” by that gold standard of abrasion, Ed Koch—couldn't make it in the absence of the old Democratic machine. There is now only a “coalition,” and even that, politically, is hardly the “gorgeous mosaic” once invoked by Mayor David Dinkins.

It's an ethnic-racial quilt that gets unraveled or repaired largely at the whim of Al Sharpton, an ever more respectable fraud who equals Green in brains and murders him when it comes to charm.

It is tempting to believe that Green was beaten by a different sort of machine, a new and soulless one—namely, the glowing computer terminal that made the business fortune of his

info-baron opponent, Michael Bloomberg. But this would ignore the campaign's essential moment, which was not just human but positively tactile. It's now generally agreed that the new mayor was elected about ten days before voters went to the polls, when Rudolph Giuliani draped his arm over Bloomberg's billionaire shoulders.

This human factor has made for a huge, no doubt temporary, resurgence in city politics. Giuliani stands triumphant atop the rubble for having discovered and conveyed to the suffering citizenry some unexpected and deeply personal part of himself. The legendary New York mayors—Jimmy Walker, Fiorello LaGuardia, Koch—had always swaggered into that category with blarney and shtick; for nearly eight years before September 11 Rudy himself had vied for a place with them by sternly playing bad cop—bad cop with the electorate. Then all of that fell away from him—along with, one would almost swear, the bad hair and the lisp—to be replaced by something not just cool-headed and hands-on but also very quiet. The transformation came when Giuliani told New Yorkers, in the first days after the attack, that they should go up to people on the street who appeared to be frightened and offer them encouraging words. It was hauntingly simple, an almost mystical sort of constituent service, and it came from the heart. By Friday of that week



ROSCOE
by William Kennedy
Viking, 291 pages, \$24.95

CHUCK PYLE

everyone wanted Rudolph W. Giuliani to be mayor forever—and at certain unfortunate moments the old untranscendent Rudy couldn't help hinting he wanted that too.

What a mega-mayoral moment for William Kennedy to come along with *Roscoe*, the best novel of city-hall politics to appear in ages, even though it is set decades ago, before Kennedy's Irish brethren left the committee rooms to coach their sons' suburban Little League teams. (In New York, at last year's Al Smith dinner, one could hardly find a boyo among the elected officials on the dais.) This new book has a lyricism and a gusto rarely achieved in serious American novels about politics, which are rare to begin with, and any consideration of *Roscoe* must eventually include a re-reading of Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* (1956), the touchstone of American municipal fiction.

Roscoe's underpinnings can be found in the author's 1983 nonfiction history of New York State's capital, *O Albany!* Kennedy devoted a chapter of that book to Dan O'Connell, the longtime boss of the Albany Democratic Party—or the “Democracy,” as the party liked to think of itself, with a certain willed confusion of the part and the whole. Mario Cuomo once told “the story of Dan's being marooned on an island with another man, with only one coconut between them,” according to Kennedy. “They decided to take a vote on who should eat it, and when the vote was counted, Dan had won, 110 to 1.” O'Connell, as devoted to cockfighting as to politics, more or less controlled the city from 1921 to 1977. His machine generally “suggested you register Democratic,” Kennedy says. “And if you didn't, the tax assessment on your house might suddenly double.”

In *Roscoe*, Dan O'Connell becomes Patsy McCall, “the man who forked the lightning” and took Albany back from the Republicans in 1921. He rules with the aid of Elisha Fitzgibbon, a steel magnate who lives on his grandfather's estate outside the city. (Elisha's flesh-and-blood basis is Edwin Corning, once a major holder in the Ludlum

Steel Company.) The last, and apparently fictional, member of the city's governing threesome is the eponymous Roscoe Owen Conway, a poetic lawyer and fixer whose father, Felix, once the city's mayor, tutored the triumvirate in the art of politics.

The novel opens in August of 1945, just before Elisha's son, Alex, Albany's new “soldier-boy Mayor,” returns from Europe. What might have been an hour of transgenerational triumph for the machine turns out, however, to be one of grave danger. A new wave of “the Morality Plague,” resurgent “every seven or so years” by Roscoe's reckoning, is infecting the body politic. This time its principal agent is the “mustachioed little gnome” in the governor's mansion, Thomas E. Dewey, who is closing in on the Democracy's warehouses and gambling operation. Near the opening of the novel Elisha commits suicide, an event that produces, thanks to the machine's prerogatives, “two autopsies, one real, one fake,” along with a wake featuring “all three rings and sideshow of the Democratic circus: pomaded ward leaders, aldermen and committeemen, underpaid undersheriffs, jailers, lawyers and clerks, bloated contractors, philanthropic slumlords, nervous bookmakers unaccustomed to sunlight.”

Suddenly, at fifty-five, Roscoe, overweight and troubled with an ulcer, is up to his straw hat in troubles. But even before Elisha's death he tells Patsy that he wants out: “I'm sick of carrying time around on my back like a bundle of rocks.” Patsy doesn't believe that Roscoe would really forsake the machine, but the triumph of the novel is that Kennedy makes us believe it. Roscoe may live politics, but he doesn't breathe them. He's a turbulent romantic, churning with repressed feeling. He's had a twenty-five-year affair with Hattie Wilson, landlady to the party's brothels, but all that time he's been enamored, like a courtly lover, of Veronica, Elisha's wife. Now that she's Elisha's widow, everything is different.

Veronica let Roscoe put his arms around her while she wept—spasmodic, throaty crying. Roscoe held grief in his arms and knew he could die of

happiness, a traitor, embracing his best friend's wife. Yes, it's true, Elisha, old pal. You're dead and we're not.

The novel's blood and plot lines are supremely baroque: Roscoe was once married to Veronica's sister, Pamela, whose son, Gilby, supposedly fathered by a Russian exile before being adopted by Elisha and Veronica, may be Elisha's biological son after all. Pamela's reappearance for a gaudy custody battle dominates a fair stretch of the book's action—all of it as absorbing as it may be preposterous. Kennedy also gives us a sudden feud between Patsy and his brother Bindy. (The volatile McCalls will be remembered by readers of Kennedy's 1978 novel, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*.) Moreover, but not finally, there is an exploding rivalry between Roscoe's policeman brother, O.B., and his colleague Mac McEvoy over credit for the long-ago killing of Legs Diamond—the subject of another Kennedy novel, in which the killing was subject to a substantially different interpretation.

The interested reader may or may not be inclined to separate all the truth and fiction—to find out, for example, from *O Albany!* that Elisha's real-life counterpart died during an operation, not from “a huge dose of chloral hydrate.” Kennedy's Author's Note, concerning his method for giving art to actuality, is worthy of grand-jury testimony by the nimblest pol.

There was a political machine in Albany comparable to the one in this book, and some of the events here correspond to historical reality, and some characters here may seem to be real people. But I don't do that sort of thing. These are all invented characters, even Al Smith and Jack Diamond. They might be better than their prototypes (if they have any), they might be worse; but I hope they and their book are true. As Roscoe points out, truth is in the details, even if you invent the details.

Which is to say, the historical novelist gets to order up two autopsies.

Kennedy somehow manages to keep this book under control, though he's up against his own tendency toward phantasmagoria. The dead are always terribly available to him. One remem-

bers Francis Phelan, Billy's father, gabbing with them in the graveyard in *Ironweed* (1983). This time Roscoe, as if he were Yeats, sets out brandy snifters for them. A quarter century after his death Felix Conway can still appear to his son in a hotel lobby, for spectral reinforcement of the advice he used to give in the manner of Tammany's George Washington Plunkitt: "Give your friends jobs, but at a price, and make new friends every day." There's no reason for Felix to stop giving advice just because he's no longer alive. "People say voting the dead is immoral," he once explained to Roscoe, "but what the hell, if they were alive they'd all be Democrats. Just because they're dead don't mean they're Republicans." In fact, in big American cities the cemetery has always been a one-party town.

Kennedy had an early, not quite healthy, taste for the orgiastic high jinks of J. P. Donleavy; that sort of stuff is very visible in his 1969 novel, *The Ink Truck*. Here, even though Roscoe does talk to a billy goat for a few paragraphs, fantasy has been pretty well disciplined. The author's Joycean lilts and diction ("modality") see only fine, occasional service in conjoining the precinct with the cosmos: "Watch the city opening its doors: jewelers, cafeteria workers, newsboys, cigar dealers lowering awnings, sweeping sidewalks, washing windows, stacking papers, all dressing their corner of the universe for another day of significant puttering." Memory breaks the narrative moment more often, perhaps, than it should, and Roscoe himself can sometimes be a bit too sententiously Delphic, but Kennedy has all the chief instruments of novel writing, including dialogue, terrifically in tune.

"All you have to do is sell Patsy your soul."

"Didn't I do that a long time ago?"

"A soul as big as yours, you get to sell it more than once."

Above all, it is Roscoe who makes things work. We know just why he wants out ("An entire society structured on extortion and subordination: what a way to live") and just why he's stayed in ("Manic life, the gamble, game chickens, high action, the campaign, that's the

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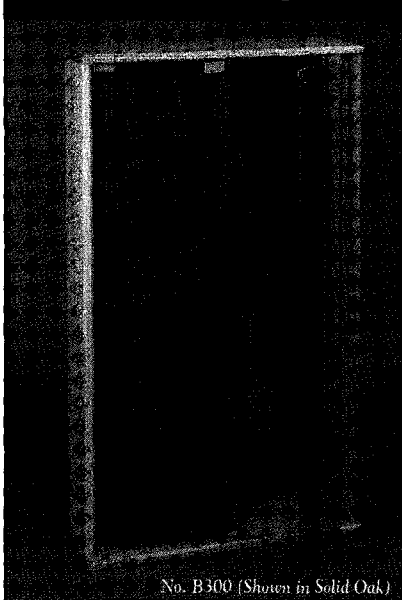
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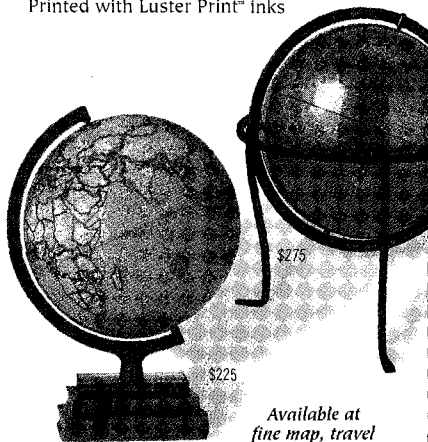
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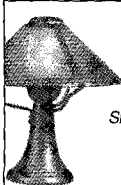
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stuff"). Veronica sees in her indefatigable liege "a man of immense spirit, a man for loss"—a taste for which is perhaps more requisite for bigness than a taste for winning. What makes Roscoe splendid is his incompleteness; the lesser creatures around him are, he understands, "final versions of themselves"—a definition of flat characters more brilliant than the one offered long ago by E. M. Forster.

If I detect a false note in the protagonist, it's his name. I can't buy the idea that Felix Conway would name a boy Roscoe only a few years after Roscoe Conkling, the titan of New York's Republican Stalwarts, had passed from the scene. So loathed was Conkling by the other party that in 1887, way out in Kansas, one rabidly Democratic citizen, suspecting his wife of adultery and doubting his paternity of the son she had just delivered, cursed the plump new boy, a future star of silent film, with the name Roscoe Conkling Arbuckle.

In *O Albany!*, Kennedy requires several paragraphs to list all the ties his family and neighbors had to the Democracy's machine. Most important, his father, who "became a deputy sheriff of Albany County in the late years of his life and always worked the polls on Election Day ... was a fanatical loyalist to Dan [O'Connell] and all he stood for." The ubiquity of these nepotic connections made the future novelist understand how, for the Irish, politics "was justice itself, and sufficient unto itself." Kennedy's expression of this idea echoes some remarks by Mayor Frank Skeffington, in *The Last Hurrah*, about how politics gave the Irish constituency "everything they have ... it was only when we gained a measure of political control that our people were able to come up for a little fresh air."

Edwin O'Connor's book won this magazine's fiction prize for its embodiment, in Skeffington, of James Michael Curley, who presided over Boston—the novel's unnamed and unmistakable locale—for several terms between 1914 and 1950. Unlike Kennedy's Roscoe, O'Connor's Skeffington is never be-

hind the scenes but always out in front. If Roscoe wants out of politics, Skeffington wants in forever. But the same tectonic force is moving the ground beneath each man's feet and bringing his world to a conclusion. That force is Washington, D.C. These pols of urban democracy were, in their way, more opposed to big government than Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater. The machine might seem omnipotent, but it was *little* government, local and personal. The New Deal "destroyed the old-time boss," Jack Mangnan says in *The Last Hurrah*. "What Roosevelt did was to take the handouts out of the local hands. A few little things like Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, and the like." The "little tin box" had been replaced by the U.S. Treasury. *O Albany!* follows the trend into the 1960s. New York's capital, Kennedy says, was "the last large city in the country to have an antipoverty program," because Dan O'Connell wanted his voters grateful to city hall, not to some new HUD office with a drop ceiling and clerks who could pass a civil-service exam.

The Last Hurrah's overarching melancholy derives from the inexorable replacement of the bumptious by the bland. Skeffington's final opponent, a smiling cipher named Kevin McCluskey, is no progressive visionary. He's the candidate of convenience not only for some good-government types but also for Skeffington's sclerotic Brahmin enemies, including Amos Force, the newspaper publisher for whose family the mayor's mother once worked as a housemaid. The challenger's defining moment as a candidate is a nauseating series of TV programs called "At Home With Kevin McCluskey," during which McCluskey appears with a rented dog, a picture of the Pope, and four of his children. (Students of Massachusetts political history will remember "At Home With the Kennedys.") A reader who endures the broadcast ends up yearning to return to the company of the incumbent mayor's Celtic hangers-on, such as "Ditto" Boland and Cuke Gillen, "an ex-vaudevillian who served Skeffington officially as the City Greeter."

O'Connor's novel acknowledges its tilt toward a sentimental view of Skeffington. The book manages to point out that "he was not a guiltless man," and gives obligatory notice of "buildings erected and roads constructed unnecessarily and at three times their normal cost ... the gerry-mandering, the featherbedding ... the whole, incredible, ridiculous, wasteful tangle," but it devotes far more pages and emotional attention to the way its colorful old lion will, say, prevent an undertaker from gouging a poor widow. It's no wonder the real-life Curley—as Jack Beatty shows in his biography, *The Rascal King* (1992)—was delighted with O'Connor's fictional reconstruction.

At one point in *Roscoe*, Kennedy tells us that Patsy McCall's "house smelled like Sunday." O'Connor's whole book feels like Grandmother's dining room on that day of the week, the aroma of the roast traveling toward the lace curtains and the closed windows. Archaic moments abound: just after diagnosing Skeffington's coronary, the doctor, without authorial irony, lights a cigarette. The book's chief antique pleasure lies in its speeches. The mayor's language is as florid and fringed as Roscoe's. He speaks it in the last historical moment when voters flocked to oratory instead of fleeing it: "Just between ourselves, I continually wonder at my own effrontery in opposing this young man who's going to do so much for us all."

If *The Last Hurrah* is never tin-eared, it walks all too often on flat feet. Skeffington's world is displayed for us through his earnest nephew, Adam, whom the mayor encourages to accompany him on his last campaign. Adam constantly underlines his status as a literary device ("I hadn't realized that all this was a part of your job"), and one can no more believe Skeffington's desire for his company than one can imagine Groucho Marx wanting to pal around with George Fenneman after the show. Even the novel's great set piece—a fifty-page wake that the mayor turns into a campaign stop—is hobbled by the nephew's stiff, functional presence. In form, *Roscoe* is something like

The Last Hurrah's opposite; Kennedy keeps everything swirling and stylized. You sometimes want his book to comb its hair as much as you'd like to muss up *The Last Hurrah*'s.

Edwin O'Connor died in 1968, just before turning fifty. William Kennedy is now seventy-four, and has had aging on his mind for at least a dozen years. In 1989 he told an interviewer, "I don't think there's any rule that you can't supersede your own early work ... I am fond of insisting that I'm not in decline, that the next book is going to be better than the last. It may or may not be, but I have no doubt I know more about how to write a novel, more about what it means to be alive, than I ever have." *Roscoe* can be seen as the fulfillment of this promise by the author to his constituency. It may, in fact, be William Kennedy's greatest game.

But this new novel should be only a penultimate hurrah. Its sequel is readily apparent as it closes. At the end of *Roscoe*, Elisha Fitzgibbon's son, Alex, is still at the beginning of his reign over Albany: "a rich man's son with a common man's heart," Roscoe thinks. "God-damn it, Alex, that is an unbeatable combination. You can be Mayor forever." And he very nearly was. Alex's real-life basis, the Curley to his Skeffington, was Erastus Corning, whose incumbency stretched from 1942 to 1983, earning him a mention in *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* Corning would not be wholly his own man until well into the 1970s, when Dan O'Connell, responsible for the sixty-eight janitors employed at city hall, finally left the building. But Corning and Kennedy are a natural fit, each having been smart enough to seize just the right amount of turf, political or literary. Like the novelist, Corning had an innate sense of scale. As Kennedy wrote in *O Albany!*, "Erastus's ready answer was that he never wanted higher office, that he liked Albany, liked its manageable size, could get to know almost everybody." No one gets to be mayor for life—not even Erastus, let alone Rudy. But literature outlasts politics, and by reaching deep instead of wide, William Kennedy has made himself the man who will govern Albany for all time. ■

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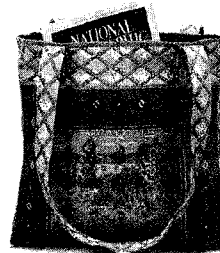
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BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

Richard Lingeman has set himself a thankless task. A new biography of Sinclair Lewis, whose novels have been regarded as old but not classic for half a century, is decidedly not in demand. Lewis's dismal reputation stems largely from the trajectory of his career, which concluded with one of the longest and most depressing anticlimaxes in American letters. After a lengthy and unrewarding apprenticeship, during which he wrote five forgettable and forgotten novels, Lewis published *Main Street* (1920), which his earlier biographer, Mark Schorer, rightly characterized as "the most sensational event in twentieth-century American publishing history." "That idiot has written a masterpiece," a stunned H. L. Mencken cabled his *Smart Set* co-editor, George Jean Nathan, after reading the galley proofs of the novel. Over the next nine years Lewis wrote four more best sellers—*Babbitt* (1922), *Arrowsmith* (1925), *Elmer Gantry*

(1927), and *Dodsworth* (1929)—all important books, though none could rival *Main Street*, and each was worse than the previous one. If only he had then laid down his pen. Instead, until his death, in 1951, he continued to churn out

**SINCLAIR LEWIS:
REBEL FROM MAIN
STREET**

by Richard Lingeman
Random House, 688
pages, \$35.00

novels, along with plays that never made it to Broadway. Some of the novels, such as *Cass Timberlane* (1945) and *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), were commercial successes, but all these works were at

best undistinguished, and many were downright terrible.

Although Lewis's productivity clearly outlasted his talent, that alone can't account for the literary community's consistent dismissal of him. Even during the 1920s, when he was at his most gifted, he was out of fashion among self-consciously sophisticated writers, who thought him a hack. (Lewis was understandably stung by the expatriates' and experimentalists' Franzenian conviction that, as he put it, "if the

damned book [*Main Street*] has sold so well, I must be rotten.") Even his champions—E. M. Forster, Rebecca West, and, by far his most influential supporter, Mencken—offered (quite correctly) qualified praise. And then the Nobel Prize, in 1930, finished him off. Lewis was the first American to win the literature prize, but accompanying the announcement, as the critic Ludwig Lewisohn wrote around that time, "something very like a groan went up" among U.S. writers and critics. The literati were convinced—probably rightly so—that Lewis had won the prize only because his scathing, satirical novels confirmed Europeans' stereotypes of American society as vulgar, hypocritical, and materialistic. ("In crowning Mr. Lewis's work," Lewis Mumford protested, "the Swedish Academy has, in the form of a compliment, conveyed a subtle disparagement of the country they honored.") The prize only intensified disdain for Lewis, and he, and later Pearl S. Buck, would thenceforth provide evidence for those who argue that the award is hollow. Critics who would otherwise have been charitably disposed toward him couldn't help comparing him unfavorably with those they thought more deserving.

Like Mencken's, Lewis's vogue was intense but abbreviated: by the time he



SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION

won the Nobel, his novels of the 1920s already seemed hopelessly dated to the intellectual tastemakers, whose interests now lay not in diatribes against American provincialism but in political and economic criticism and “proletarian fiction.” By the 1940s and 1950s the aesthetically minded New Critics shunned even his best work as stylistically pedestrian. Thus *Time*, always a journal to confirm the consensus, declared in its obituary that Lewis “was not a great writer, nor even a very good one,” and ten years later Schorer averred in Lewis’s official biography that “he was one of the worst writers in modern American literature.”

Schorer’s 868-page biography has for forty years been the definitive life of Lewis. Comprehensive and stylishly written, it effectively married the modern doorstep literary biography—in which seemingly the subject’s every journey and quarrel is minutely chronicled, to deadening effect—with a keen if not generous critical assessment (“I must say I never really liked Lewis’s work all that much,” Schorer once told Gore Vidal). Lingeman, who has written an engaging history of small-town America and also a two-volume biography of Theodore Dreiser (a writer perhaps as out of fashion as Lewis), was probably moved to undertake this project by the conviction, shared by Lewis’s remaining admirers, that somehow the novelist deserves better. But Lingeman, an honest and sober biographer, can hardly deliver a full-throated vindication. Moreover, his long book cannot replace Schorer’s even longer and far more thorough study, and Schorer’s archaeological investigation of the Lewis papers neglected no startling episodes for Lingeman to reveal. This leaves him to embrace Lewis, with more enthusiasm than acumen, as a “literary sociologist” who “*really cared*.”

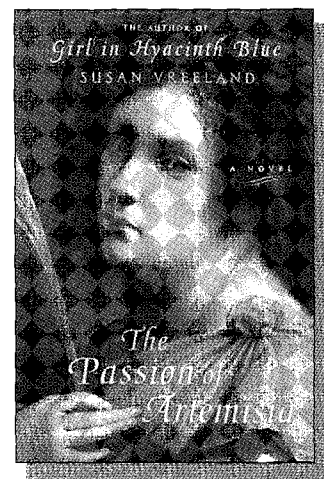
That may be all one can say of Lewis in the end, but a final judgment doesn’t do him justice. Lewis can be rightly appreciated only by concentrating on his anomalous book *Main Street*, the story of a slightly pretentious new bride’s frustrating combat with the petty society of Gopher Prairie, a

small Minnesota town (modeled after Lewis’s home town of Sauk Centre), and with her stodgy and self-satisfied husband. It evoked the directionless struggle of thousands of Americans (especially women in the hinterland, hundreds of whom were convinced that Lewis was writing about them) to live what the protagonist, Carol Kennicott, calls “a more conscious life.” Published when, for the first time in the nation’s history, more people were living in cities than in the country, the book was in part a satire exposing the idiocy of rural life, so it also resonated with urban sophisticates and with those—like Carol—who aspired to be such. To be sure, Hamlin Garland (*Main-Travelled Roads*, 1891, *Rose of Dutcher’s Coolly*, 1895) and other novelists had earlier described village life as narrow and dreary, but *Main Street* was the right book at the right time, and as Lewisohn wrote, “Perhaps no novel since ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ had struck so deep over so wide a surface of the national life.” The novel is remembered for its sociological significance and as the epitome of what the critic Carl Van Doren called “the revolt from the village.” But today’s reader, expecting a satirical indictment, is struck—just as Mencken, Forster, and other astute critics at the time were struck—by the novel’s sympathy and nuance.

With a fresh and vigorous photographic method, Lewis introduced readers to *Main Street* as Carol, just arrived from St. Paul, saw it—building by building, detail by detail. Slowly and relentlessly Lewis focused: on the food-stained tablecloths in the hotel dining room, on the drugstore’s greasy marble soda-fountain counter, on the “pictures of coy fat prostitutes” in the tobacco shop. But while the reader is sharing Carol’s dismay at the dingy, haphazard ugliness of the town, Lewis reveals the view of another newcomer, Bea Sorenson, who, bored with farm life, has come to Gopher Prairie in hopes of finding work as a hired girl. Carol, looking through the flyspecked windows of the hotel, sees only rickety chairs and cuspidors, but Bea thrills to “the swell traveling man” she spies there, to the “lovely marble” soda fountain, and to all the stores—“one just for

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tobacco alone." And then, in what Lewis has already established as a four-block downtown, "the roar of the city began to frighten her." The reader knows that Carol's is the more discerning vision, but also that she sneers too easily and that her view of Main Street—and Lewis's—isn't the only perspective.

What impressed most readers was the ceaseless, precise detail ("The amount of sheer data in it is amazing," the young F. Scott Fitzgerald, who was but briefly infatuated with Lewis's writing, exclaimed in a fan letter). Lewis had captured and catalogued middle-class provincial life—its speech, its houses, its gadgets, its caste marks, its stultifying social rounds. But more important, he had captured the vague stirrings—stymied because they cannot be articulated—of the slightly better than average. By eschewing a main character who would show up the subjects of his satire with clever retorts and sparkling wit, Lewis avoided the trap that ensnares most writers of satirical protest, who use their protagonists to take potshots at buffoons. In fact, though he drew her sympathetically, Lewis made Carol a difficult and shallow young woman, frustrated because she's smart enough to be discontent with her life and her surroundings but not smart enough, as he later wrote, to have "any clearly defined vision of what she really wants to do or be"—a situation far more common (and moving) than that of the heroically protesting artist or genius.

Above all, Lewis apprehended what Mencken called—in the most penetrating and witty assessment of Lewis's artistry yet written—"the essential tragedy of American life, and if not the tragedy, then at least the sardonic farce; ... the great strangeness that lies between husband and wife." Lewis empathized with Carol's feeling of entrapment in her marriage to the obtuse and cloddish Will, and also with Will's decent but constricted code ("Do your work, care for your family ... venerate the flag") and his "pathetic inability to comprehend the turmoil that goes on within her" (a limitation wrenching to both parties). Lewis's great achievement, Mencken recognized, was not to take sides in the resultant conflict, not "to

turn the thing into a mere harangue against one or the other."

Above all, he is too intelligent to take the side of Carol, as nine novelists out of ten would have done. He sees clearly what is too often not seen—that her superior culture is, after all, chiefly bogus—that the oafish Kennicott, in more ways than one, is actually better than she is ... Her dream of converting a Minnesota prairie town into a sort of Long Island suburb, with overtones of Greenwich Village and the Harvard campus, is quite as absurd as his dream of converting it into a second Minneapolis, with overtones of Cary, Ind., and Paterson, N.J.

Extravagant claims cannot be made for the novel. Lewis's grasp of the moral distinctions and ambiguities of the human condition at the heart of great fiction was unsteady in *Main Street*, as is evident when the novel is compared with the one that beat it for the 1921 Pulitzer Prize—Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*. Nevertheless, the novel was and remains an astonishing accomplishment, and Lewis, then thirty-five, seemed to be a first-rate—perhaps had the makings of a great—novelist. But his ambitions lay elsewhere, and he also led himself astray. Two years after *Main Street*, Lewis published *Babbitt*, and the modulated satire in the former had coarsened and intensified in the latter. Lewis was a natural mimic, and starting with *Babbitt* he played for easy laughs. In fact, his satire was increasingly so pat and merciless that by 1927, when *Elmer Gantry* appeared, it had become clinical and unrelievedly hard. Attempting to be generous, critics have hailed what Schorer called Lewis's "gift for imitating the speaking American [midwestern] voice." This is patronizing. Lewis brilliantly rendered the forced jocularity of the speech of middle-class midwestern business and social life, but he lacked Ring Lardner's subtlety and sharp ear, and his mimicry contained far more burlesque than wit. (*Babbitt*'s famously braying, boosting oration to the Zenith Real Estate Board was remarkable—but Lewis hit the same note for eleven pages.) One senses that Lewis had self-indulgently stopped listening to the subjects he was aurally dissecting,

and hence his mimicry lapsed into dated mockery. Malcolm Cowley justifiably complained that in Lewis's final novel his characters sounded "like survivors from a vanished world, like people just emerging from orphanages and prisons, where they had listened for thirty years to nothing but tape recordings of Lewis novels."

Yet if in his reliance on mimicry Lewis took the easy way, in *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Elmer Gantry* he also set for himself an arduous and serious plan of work—one that guaranteed, however, that artistic greatness would elude him. In *Main Street* and these, his other best novels, Lewis meticulously chronicled the life of the new middle class, in Dakota villages and in the Cincinnati and the Minneapolis (what Lewis defined as "transitional metropolises," the "cities from 200,000 to 500,000"), in university towns and at third-rate Bible colleges, among salesmen in Pullman cars and smokers, merchants' wives at amateur theatricals, advertising men and real-estate developers at the Athletic Club, public-health bureaucrats in an Iowa city and liberal Methodist ministers in the Corn Belt. Lewis researched compulsively: he spent months collecting material for *Elmer Gantry* in Kansas City, where he held a weekly seminar with a cross section of the city's clergymen; he filled notebooks with phrases and jargon he'd gathered from his colloquies with salesmen; he drew maps of the composite state and city he created for his novels, noting the kinds and colors of the dogs and which streets they were walked on, and sketched the floor plans of the houses, including types and arrangement of furniture. Lewis's absorption in this milieu made him able, as Forster marveled, "to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination."

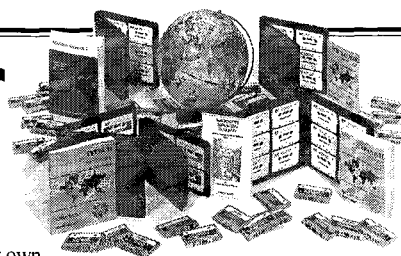
Through his accumulation of detail Lewis painted the most vivid and comprehensive picture we have of the middle-class heartland as it was being fully subsumed by a national economy and a consumer culture—an event that historians now recognize as one of the most far-reaching social transformations in American history. These novels are much less successful as explorations of

character and motivation than they are, to paraphrase Lingeman, as works of literary sociology, and fiction was perhaps not the most appropriate vehicle with which to impart the world Lewis observed. Fitzgerald, for one, was indisputably a far greater novelist. Even so, Lewis's first wife, Grace, asked and answered an important question: "Were the 1920s really the Jazz Age except for a few? Most Americans at that time lived more like Sinclair Lewis characters." Moreover, the novels remain much more compelling than the great contemporary sociological work that explored the same ground: *Middletown* (1929), Robert and Helen Lynd's exhaustive examination of the middle class of Muncie, Indiana. The novels work on the reader with an unspectacular, cumulative, absorbing power, which is perhaps why Edmund Wilson commented that "you have to read the whole of a novel of Lewis to find out that there is anything remarkable about it."

Nevertheless, to praise those novels is to acknowledge that after writing his one truly spectacular book, Lewis abjured literature for what Forster called "photography." And in what would prove an astonishingly prophetic assessment (and also the only analysis of Lewis's work I've come across that addresses what would seem the obvious question provoked by an examination of his career), Forster explained in 1929 that Lewis's work was henceforth "bound to be disappointing," because "photography is a pursuit for the young." "So long as a writer has the freshness of youth on him," Forster wrote, "he can work the snapshot method, but when it passes he has nothing to fall back upon." As Lewis's mimicry became broad, so his observations became flabby. The "sheer data" that he had used to delineate minute yet telling social distinctions was now too often just so much stuff.

But the consolation Forster offered continues to be the best reason—aside from *Main Street*, the only reason—to read Lewis: "The historian of our future will cease to worry over this, will pick up the earlier and brighter volumes ... and will find there not only genius, but a record of our age." ■

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BOOKS

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

The Iliad anew; Ved Mehta on the couch; Andrea Barrett blends exactitude and compassion

.....

Elizabeth Cook's re-interpretation of the *Iliad* demonstrates that epic verse has yet to exhaust its ability to assume new and surprising shapes. This poetic masterpiece, a psychologically acute portrait of the Homeric hero Achilles, begins by depicting him in Hell, jealously yearning for the physical satisfactions that the living take for granted.



ACHILLES

by Elizabeth Cook

Picador USA, 128 pages, \$16.00

This is what happens when you are dead:

You know the living are up there, driving your horses, ploughing your fields, handling your bowls. Eating. The living are always eating; their tongues fossicking among the bones.

A trendy and unimaginative approach to the *Iliad* would be to resurrect Achilles in a contemporary setting, perhaps as an inner-city cop seeking vengeance for his partner's death. Cook is more innovative; she preserves the otherworldly preoccupations of the Homeric world—mortals resent the tedium of Hades and make love to sea nymphs, while a goddess wrestles with her desire for solitude—but imbues this antiquated material with a post-Freudian emotional sensibility, focusing more on the nuances of individual motivation than on the grandeur of the action. Thus her warriors are remarkably sensitive souls, attuned to the exquisiteness of human feeling. Patroclus, she suggests, "loves Achilles but not so much as he is loved" and is humbled by the knowledge "that he is less than Achilles even in this." Stylistically, *Achilles* is also unfailingly modern: swift, cinematic, sexually explicit, and ravishingly beautiful. Cook, a former university lecturer and Renaissance scholar, intensifies the lyrical weirdness of Greek mythology by emphasizing the ironic. Apples on Mount Pelion are so delectable that "no human there

would choose a gold one," and Achilles' "sumptuous" hatred for Hector spreads "slowly, luxuriously, like cream."

A daring author—and Cook borders on the swashbuckling—is bound to hit the occasional false note. When Achilles lets out a loud war whoop, she jarringly writes that "the Trojans shit themselves." And her postmodern final chapter reads like an extended non sequitur, a lengthy meditation on John Keats's indebtedness to Achilles that is supposed to illustrate the *Iliad's* inspirational reach. The academic window dressing is unnecessary; Cook's stunning tale is proof enough that Achilles' story resonates through the ages. —ELIZABETH JUDD

Evan S. Connell's *The Aztec Treasure House*—comprising essays from his previous collections *The White Lantern* (1980) and *A Long Desire* (1979) along with two new pieces—is a book to lay up for gloomy afternoons or rainy evenings. In its pages an amateur scholar and accomplished writer—see his best-selling Custer biography, *Son of the Morning Star* (1984), and his celebrated novel *Mrs. Bridge* (1959)—lures us into eye-widening journeys down the rabbit holes and back alleys of history, legend, and humane learning. Like the Wedding Guest mesmerized by the Ancient Mariner, when Connell starts telling these tales of intellectual and geographical adventure, we cannot choose but hear.

What kind of tales, you ask? The oldest and the best. For instance, Connell explores the origins of sunken Atlantis and of mysterious Mu, tracks the Norse discovery of America (including the possibility of a Viking-Indian battle in Minnesota), and outlines the medieval belief in Prester John, an all-powerful Christian



THE AZTEC TREASURE HOUSE

by Evan S. Connell

Counterpoint, 470 pages, \$28.00

emperor of the East. Other pages describe the quest for El Dorado, chronicle the search for the Missing Link and the reckless determination of Antarctic explorers, summarize the career of the alchemist Paracelsus, and trace the astonishing wanderings around the known world of the fourteenth-century traveler Ibn Batuta, who covered at least 75,000 miles in all. Here, too, are mini-accounts of the Rosetta stone and the Children's Crusade and the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde.

In short, *The Aztec Treasure House* is a twenty-part testament to the joy of finding things out. Connell would appear to have read widely around some tantalizing topic, jotted down reams of notes, and then condensed everything he had learned about, say, Etruscan civilization into a genial 7,000 words. His prose is conversational, often addressing the reader directly; his path through a subject is rambling and easygoing. Yet he can evoke suspense with the flick of an adverb: "Present wisdom holds that the last unadulterated Neanderthal died 40,000 years ago. However, one April evening in 1907 some Russian explorers ..." He can be unexpectedly touching, too, as in this note on a civilization in the Indus Valley that flourished 4,000 years ago: "In the rubble of a little city called Chanhudaro an archaeologist noticed a brick with the print of a cat's paw slightly overlapped by the paw of a dog. These were not symbolic designs but actual prints left by the animals as they raced across a wet brick. And it was clear from the impress of the pads that both had been going full speed, the dog chasing the cat."

Of course, like any virtuoso, Connell sometimes lets out all the rhetorical stops, going for a baroque organ roll of prose poetry: "This was the time of a Dark Age in Greece, between the decay of Mycenaean civilization and the emergence of those wise marble Pericleans against whom we half-consciously measure ourselves. It was a time when that templed colossus, Egypt, was beginning to crumble. Assyrian armor glinted ominously. Phrygian trumpets bellowed. Phoenician traders drove westward, dipping their sails at Carthage and Tartessus. Fresh currents rippled the length of the Mediterranean." But don't worry: such grand flights are rare. Before long Connell is

back poking fun at one of his obsessed antiquarians: "Soon he had become not only an expert on Akkadian cuneiform but had partly deciphered the Cypriot syllabary, which sounds just as exciting."

Actually, it does sound exciting. In the middle of some reflections on Kepler, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, and Newton, our storyteller writes, "Many remarkable things may be explained, but why we are so faintly instructed by the past does not seem to be among them." Yes—but if we had more books like *The Aztec Treasure House*, we would doubtless be more understanding of the human circus and more enthusiastic about studying its past. As the old maps used to promise, here be dragons. —MICHAEL DIRDA

Despite that lush romance-novel title, Ved Mehta's account of his early love life proves to be an edgy, scrupulously frank tale of erotic misadventure. Commencing with the blind Indian-born author's arrival in 1960s New York after he lands a coveted job as a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, *All for Love* details Mehta's relationships with four women who seem to share a mission—tormenting him. The Jewish ballet dancer Gigi, the flighty Englishwoman Vanessa, his fellow Indian Lola, and the emotionally unstable Kilty all lure Mehta into periods of erotic intensity, only to dump him cruelly. Gigi, for instance, leaves him for an ex-lover after admitting that she could never commit to a non-Jew, and Vanessa chooses another man and devotion to the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh over life with the author. Before long the reader might well wonder if Mehta isn't something of a glutton for punishment in his choice of lovers.

This would make for gloomy reading if it weren't for Mehta's wonderfully self-lacerating style and his gentlemanly refusal to blame these troubled women for his heartaches. Lola, who winds up running a chain of Denim Depot clothes stores in India, would have been an easy figure to ridicule, but Mehta instead depicts a confused, vibrant soul unwilling

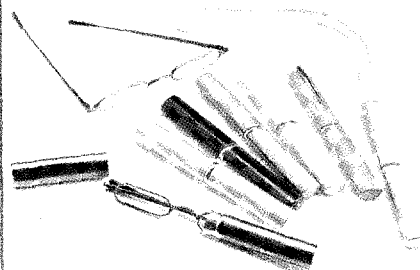


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to lead the life of a writer's companion. Rather than taking revenge, the author turns his focus inward, admitting that what these women shared was not sadism but the illusory belief that Mehta's blindness would allow him to look beneath their skin and see some better selves within them. He is reluctantly helped toward this insight during a course of psychotherapy with the fractious, cigar-chomping Dr. Bak, who brutally reminds Mehta that "to love somebody the way you did, without regard for your own well-being, is a way of avoiding being loved." Although these therapy sessions, with their occasional lapses into Freudian banality, may lack the dramatic sparkle of the book's earlier sections, they do provide a fitting coda to Mehta's most unsentimental education. —STEPHEN AMIDON

Describing one of the second-banana players in his expansive new novel, Jonathan Dee writes that his "imagination was powered by a deep conflation of passion and irony." The same thing might be said of the author himself.



PALLADIO
 by Jonathan Dee
 Doubleday, 388 pages, \$24.95

Palladio, in fact, represents a pitched battle between the two, fought on multiple fronts. In one narrative strand Molly Howe grows up in Ulster, New York, a genteel hinterland that seems to her "not so much where she belonged as simply where she found herself." Like most suburbs in American fiction, Ulster is a hotbed of denial and familial dysfunction, and Molly absorbs the spirit of the place to a pathological degree. By the time she flees, at age eighteen, dodging the fallout from her affair with a married man, she has learned to handle emotions like hazardous materials. Here, in short, is a child of her time, which happens to be the flat-affect eighties.

Meanwhile, Dee tracks the career of a young adman, John Wheelright. With its bustling, meretricious energy, Madison Avenue gives a healthy jolt to the author's prose, just as it did in his novel *The Liberty Campaign* (1993). Yet John, like Molly, tends to fall short when it comes to passionate engagement: "Any-

thing truly interesting usually became less interesting, even to him, when he heard himself trying to explain it." Suspicious, perhaps, of his own equilibrium, John abandons his agency for Palladio, a kind of advertising ashram in rural Virginia. There he joins a crusade to change the world by means of better, artier ads, to wipe the "wry smile of irony ... off the face of our age."

Do the tales converge? Indeed they do, not once but twice—and because the first collision is a romantic one, the second is inevitably, satisfyingly tragic. Alas, Dee seems to lose control of *Palladio* as it moves toward the climax. First he relinquishes the point of view to John, whose rapidly eroding innocence is no substitute for the narrator's wide-angle wisdom. Then he splinters things even further, nudging various other characters to center stage and concluding with a confetti of slogans, captions, and ad copy. This last move is particularly damaging. It seems to suggest that all language, all feeling, all perception, must ultimately derive from the media. This is a post-modern pill that many readers will be reluctant to swallow, and Dee's accomplished and individual novel proves exactly how wrong it is—even if the book's messy architecture is anything but Palladian. —JAMES MARCUS

Set in 1941 Lenin-grad, Helen Dunmore's novel opens with deceptively gentle scenes of Chekhovian melancholy. After the death of her mother, twenty-three-year-old Anna Levin must give up her artistic studies to look after her five-year-old brother and her politically suspect father, whose writing has fallen out of favor with Stalin's cultural police. So she jumps at the chance to sketch the reclusive theatrical grande dame Marina Petrovna, with whom Anna's father might once have been romantically allied. But Anna's worries about art and romance are soon swept away as the Germans besiege her native city. Dunmore's novel transforms abruptly as well, shifting from a quiet



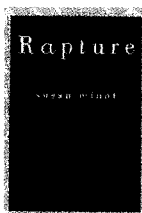
THE SIEGE
 by Helen Dunmore
 Grove Press, 294 pages, \$24.00

idyll into a study of survival under the most extreme hardship. Anna's abundant creativity is put to use ferreting out food and fuel for her helpless family, and her drawing skills are called on to sketch a neighbor's starved baby so that the grieving mother might remember her lost child. Even Anna's love affair with a young doctor is overwhelmed by the rude dictates of survival, which force the couple to forgo lovemaking for a simple sharing of body heat.

Dunmore is at her best when portraying a horrifying scene in lyrical tones, whether it be a dead man's face covered by scintillating frost or a starving family consuming a pot of jam with drunken bliss. She wisely chooses to keep the war just beyond the novel's fringes, having it lay siege to her story without ever invading the action. Only occasionally does she indulge in commonplaces, most notably with the kind-hearted whore Evgenia and the steely-eyed bureaucrat in charge of rationing the city's dwindling food, Pavlov. But these shortcomings only momentarily stall a novel that avoids consoling truisms to explore the stories of the forgotten dead. —STEPHEN AMIDON

Sex and the single girl have seldom been absent from Susan Minot's fiction. Her second collection, let's recall, was titled *Lust & Other Stories* (1989), and even her 1992 period piece, *Folly*, included the odd glimpse of Edwardian canoodling. Still, Minot has raised the erotic ante with *Rapture*, structuring this short novel around a single act of fellatio. No doubt the opening salvo in book groups across America will be *Was it good for you, too?* Yet readers in search of a paper-and-ink aphrodisiac are bound to be disappointed, because the author's take on oral intimacy—on any intimacy, really—is less rapturous than we might expect.

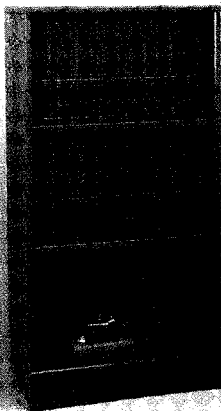
The protagonists, Kay and Benjamin, have been locked in a romantic agony for more than a year, because the latter is involved with another woman. This



RAPTURE
by Susan Minot
Knopf, 128 pages,
\$18.00

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"Book Reviews"

Answers are given in the order in which they were clued.

Across: TIMES + ERVING; WOO + DEN; PINS (hidden); IRONWEED (anag.); SENTI + MENTAL (set in anag.); TR(AL)EE; S(A + CAM)ORE; ARREST (hidden); CAPO (anag.); REAL(IS)M; GREECE (homophone); ANAT(O)MY (Amy Tan anag.); EATING (anag.); GERSHWIN (anag.); CLOTH + O; YAKS (double def.); SANS + K + R + IT; PE + AS
Down: ALAS (first letters); MEPHISTO (anag.); P + ROWLING; AS - HE; S + ENTRIES; STRA(TEC)Y (get rev.); STAG (rev.); ART + EM + I + S; I(MACE) + R (game anag.); CRIME + AN; RACIER (anag.); A + VERSION; K + NOW; WIN + TERS (rest anag.); TAR + A (rev.); T + END; STOR(MIL)Y; CA(LI + L)EE (Agee anag.)

OUT OF THE CRADLE

This unusual novel presents a real **CHALLENGE** to modern readers. To sophisticated present day readers this apparently naive, amateurish story may seem like an example of 1920s genre fiction. **But wait.** Is it really as **naïve** as it first seems? Note the wide vocabulary, the flights of **prose poetry**, the short, vivid chapters, the interior monologue, the compressed, beautiful descriptions. Old-fashioned but *intriguing*? Although certainly not everyone's piece of cake, you might like to give it a **bite**.

Out of the Cradle by John Kenrick Ellis
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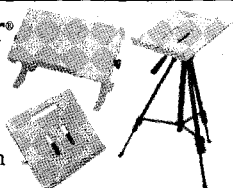
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hasn't prevented him from making the occasional cameo appearance in Kay's bed, usually without much premeditation, and the close encounter that Minot chronicles here is the pair's first in many months. Nonetheless, things seem to be falling short in the ecstasy department. Kay can't keep her mind on the business at hand: "It often happened at some point during sex: the oddness of what she was doing, in this case, swallowing a man's private parts, pumping him up and down. He wasn't making a sound or a movement. For an instant she felt the absurdity of sex like a wink."

To be sure, Kay attains a certain spiritual momentum by the end, feeling "lifted and golden and electric." But it's hard not to think that the whole thing is wasted on her partner, a quintessential masculine clod who can't keep his pants zipped up. This bed hopping does present some logistical challenges, over which Ben mulls while he's being serviced: "It had never helped, in his experience, to admit anything. You just got punished for it. His male friends all corroborated this: never tell." No wonder his climax is so, well, anticlimactic. *Rapture*, in fact, would make an excellent argument for abstinence, were it not for the genuine allure of Minot's prose. Her ruminations on modern romance have an old-fashioned glow to them, while the graphic bits manage to evoke James Salter's sublimely lyrical French postcard, *A Sport and a Pastime*. And despite her half-ironic title, sex in Minot's fiction is at least a temporary sacrament—and anything but safe. —JAMES MARCUS

In her latest collection of short stories Andrea Barrett continues a preoccupation with scientific themes adumbrated in her novels *Lucid Stars* (1988) and *The Forms of Water* (1993), one that didn't fully emerge until her National Book Award-winning collection *Ship Fever* (1996). That volume's carefully studied, densely detailed accounts of the romance and the

trauma of scientific discovery displayed a mastery of the difficult art of organizing and communicating forbidding narrative material, which reached even more impressive heights in *The Voyage of the Narwhal* (1998), in effect a modern Victorian novel about a disastrous polar expedition and its complex human cost.

Most of the six stories in this new collection are explicitly related to these two earlier books. For example, Nora Kynd, an Irish immigrant who finds her vocation by caring for tubercular patients in the Adirondack Mountains ("The Cure"), is the sister of Ned Kynd, the ship's cook who survived the extremities suffered by the *Narwhal*'s crew. Lavinia Wells, the mercurial and intellectually hungry narrator of "Theories of Rain," is the mother of the botanist Erasmus Darwin Wells, a voyager on the *Narwhal* and that novel's narrator. In fact, a reader familiar with the immediate predecessors of *Servants of the Map* gradually senses that Barrett is writing a huge serial novel, akin to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha cycle or Louise Erdrich's interconnected Native American novels, isolating diverse (nineteenth and twentieth century) and diversely questing characters and then painstakingly showing us how they are interrelated.

All these matters are recounted in an efficient prose. Though we might expect metaphors drawn from scientific techniques or natural processes, Barrett's figurative language, with which she is sparing, is more varied. Her crisp declarative sentences are usually bluntly informative (a "night-watcher" over moribund patients "was often the last to see someone alive"); occasionally they're veined with understated wry humor ("They made love in a dark museum attic, accompanied by the faint ticking of deathwatch beetles").

Such scrupulous reportorial and rhetorical attention blends exactitude and compassion, giving clarity and emotional force to Barrett's investigations of people seeking to understand the laws that govern and trouble both the visible universe and their own invariably distinctive bodies and minds. —BRUCE ALLEN



**SERVANTS
OF THE MAP**

by Andrea
Barrett

Norton, 270 pages,
\$24.95

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

Our most enigmatic songwriter has become so thoroughly documented that one book won't hold him anymore

BY WILFRID SHEED

.....

This year is the centenary of Richard Rodgers's birth, so by the time you read this, you will most likely have been awash in his music for months.

But it is entirely possible that you won't have noticed, because to a surprising extent we are always somewhat awash in Rodgers's music. He is, by best

accounts, the most often played and heard composer in the world, but such was his sheer variety, melodic inventiveness, and lack of musical ego that his work keeps disappearing into the crowd of Great American Songs 1920-1960 like a huge anonymous donation.

If personal style is what one falls back on when one runs out of things to say, Rodgers had either no style or several—a different one for each show, in fact. So although his songs are seldom grating, they don't give much away either, and one reads a new book about the man behind them with an automatic, if mild, interest. Have they found the missing piece yet? Is there a missing piece? Would it help to know?

Not that Rodgers hasn't already been written about in God's plenty, but rarely has so much ink said so little. From his mid-twenties on his life seemed to consist entirely of working on this and being seen at that—the third face from the left, if anyone was counting. Like each of the other four classic songwriters that everyone has still heard of—

Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin—Rodgers first made his mark in New York, in the golden age of newspaper publicity,

which tapered off circa 1930, when movie stars suddenly began to be the only stars. But each of the others was also good copy and fun to read about, if

the reporter was lucky enough to catch Kern at the track or Porter in his gondola. Rodgers alone seemed to convey no characteristics whatsoever, leaving all that up to his lyricist Lorenz Hart, who fortunately possessed enough color for two and for a lifetime. The hyperactive Hart not only could talk enough to fill whole newspapers at a sitting but also caroused so conspicuously between times that keeping his

name out of the papers became the issue, and Rodgers came of age playing the sobering part of sometime guardian and straight man to one of New York's real characters.

Which had its advantages. Since Hart was going to get the story anyway, Rodgers figured he might as well carouse a bit too, as Meryle Secrest reveals. In fact, by the time Hart had died and been replaced by the much milder Oscar Hammerstein, Rodgers was doing so much carousing that covering up had become a necessity as his drinking gradually became less charming and more unpredictable, and one suddenly had a sense of two straight men working together with no top banana in sight. Rodgers's name, in particular, never seemed to go out by itself anymore, but invariably became Rodgers and Hammerstein at work and Dick and Dorothy at play; in sum, he seemed to be the most dedicated partner and thoroughly married man in show biz, and an ornament to the Eisenhower years.

Signing up with Hammerstein in the first place had been the artistic equivalent of moving to the suburbs,

**SOMEWHERE FOR ME:
A BIOGRAPHY OF
RICHARD RODGERS**

by Meryle Secrest

Knopf, 457 pages, \$30.00



A sublime pairing: Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers in Makers of Melody (1929)

and Rodgers's literal move to the 'burbs that same year, 1943, would prove to be the perfect postwar blend of hypocrisy and wish fulfillment. On the one hand, his bi-location would permit his double life to go into overdrive—but, as I learned from a mutual friend, he also wasted several of his most celebrated years vainly trying to talk his way into a local country club that apparently didn't take Jews, or theater people, or whatever. So he doubled up on the blandness, and that's the version that "living memory" now remembers, and has until this book been stuck with.

Why, with genuine royalty virtually at his feet now, did Rodgers bother with the provincial nonentities at this ridiculous club? Well—his father would have understood. By 1902 Dr. William Rodgers had reached what might be called the awkward stage of American assimilation, and was almost *too* respectable. But he had mixed the signals for his two sons by raising the family in the home of his much richer and cruder in-laws, who embodied all the harshness, noise, and sense of overcrowding of an earlier time. And maybe the contrast nudged Richard's imagination on the eventual road to quiet lawns and empty rooms, and PTAs and country clubs. At any rate, that is where his Second Act found him, growing ever more remote and regal in his Bermuda shorts and even, like a regular mogul, writing a memoir, called *Musical Stages*, to hide behind forever. Later Joe Fox, his editor on that book, would confide his frustration at having to beg for a straight answer to the simplest personal question: "Was Larry Hart really a homosexual?" "I never noticed."

Gentlemen may not notice things like that, but Rodgers certainly did, and the good news is that his family has finally delivered on the second half of a one-two punch to Daddy's pretensions that began back in 1988, with the publication of Dick's breezy, sometimes bitchy, always talkative letters to his late wife, Dorothy, and culminates now with the memories and in-house gossip of his daughters, Mary and Linda, as incorporated into Secrest's workmanlike biography.

The result is rather like discovering that the Sphinx kept a diary. Just like that, our most enigmatic songwriter has become so thoroughly documented that one book won't hold him anymore. But this one at least gives the definitive view from the family, complete with its biases and insights.

In his memoir one finds that Rodgers can barely wait to tell us how impossible his family was to live with—a charge that rings strangely down the years, because in an introduction to a later edition of that book his daughter Mary made the same charge about him—not that he was bad (Secrest says he could be startlingly generous), just impossible. The one gift his whole gifted family lacked was apparently the *smallest* one for amiable chitchat. The first sounds that Richard's sensitive ears picked up in their city quarters were his grandmother's sarcastic tirades and his grandfather's defiant growls, broken only by his mother's occasional wistful piano playing between bouts—which may have given Dick his first, fatal taste for comfort music. His father, who might have taught him some adult alternatives, preferred to spend his family time in lofty, disapproving silence.

Never mind. In no time Richard Rodgers had struck the piano himself and had found with almost the first chord that it could solve practically everything, bringing peace even to his grandmother and enhancing his own status enormously—if he could just get to it before his envious brother Mort broke his fingers or set fire to the piano.

In *Musical Stages*, Rodgers introduced the piano right up front among the relatives, but it would turn out to be much more important than that, becoming with time also his imaginary friend and alter ego, to and through which he could say absolutely anything he wanted and explore his own outer limits of tenderness and wit while his impossible family looked on in admiring silence—or, at any rate, silence.

The boy's precise relationship to the instrument would be defined still further by his parents' hobby of bringing sheet music home from new musicals and singing together at the piano

while his mother played. This gave his gift a practical link with the outside world, and gave Rodgers himself a model of perfect happiness. Harmony at home, love on the stage, music everywhere. Hit me again. And again.

The most execrable child-raising can sometimes pan out—up to a point. Unfortunately, the piano never taught Rodgers a better way to cope with domestic situations than just to play something, or shut up like his father, or turn truculent like his grandfather. Any finer points, such as manners or conversation, he would have to learn from the stage, which had become his spiritual home by the age of twelve or so. And his parents don't really seem to matter again until they are sitting in the orchestra applauding their son—nice people after all, who, rare among artists' parents, thoroughly approved his chosen life: a life that he, perhaps in return, proceeded to keep as outwardly square as he possibly could, hiding his sins in the best Ivy League manner, eventually courting at full length a most suitable and ladylike young woman named Dorothy Feiner, and trying vociferously to be faithful to her at first.

Meanwhile, back in his real life, he had met the two most important elements in the early part of his career: the music of Jerome Kern, which combined for the first time the concepts "American," "classy," and "popular"—Eureka!; and the indispensable Larry Hart, with whom Rodgers, at sixteen, started to unwrap his extraordinary gift for melody.

In the matter of Larry Hart, who is easily her second most important character, Secrest winds up at least another book away from the last word—not because she isn't fair to him but because the weight of her material falls so heavily on his crack-up in his last years that it reinforces the conventional version of the funny-looking little guy who writes exquisite love songs but cannot find love himself, so naturally drinks himself to death. In the silly movie *Words and Music* (1948), Mickey Rooney hammered this image home by playing Hart as a lovelorn dwarf, so perhaps it's worth noting that Rooney himself married the likes of Ava Card-

ner and Martha Vickers, and that Larry Hart, too, could apparently look positively handsome with a wave of his wit and charm. Dwarves and near dwarves don't have to be lovelorn—although if, like Hart, they are also gay but keep proposing to girls anyway, they could have a problem.

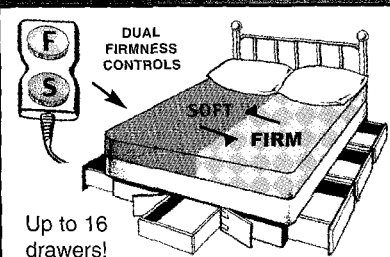
But until the bills came due on his alcoholism, Hart also had an enormous capacity for enjoying himself, and *Musical Stages* gave no impression that the reader was about to meet a basket case when Rodgers first walked into the Hart apartment. On the contrary, Rodgers found that Hart had easily the richest and most entertaining mind he'd encountered so far, a mind stocked to the brim with both high culture and low—the German operettas that Hart had recently translated (he was also distantly related to Heine), and the latest word from the street (and below the street). Better still, it was a mind stocked with ideas about both songs and musicals which echoed and clarified Rodgers's own.

In later years Rodgers would sternly talk about “a statute of limitations on gratitude,” but in this case there should have been none, because the Rodgers-in-the-piano had finally met his match: not only a friend he could talk to but one who could talk back, and who, while loving Rodgers unconditionally, would meet the first threat of his disabling musical sentimentality with the cold eye and sour tongue of a perpetual hangover, and would slap a derisive lyric on it like a STOP sign. So Rodgers would dig beyond his natural facility into parts unknown. Alter egos have inner lives too, and the Rodgers-in-the-piano proved to be as subtle and witty and even likeable as anyone else in American music. In her introduction to *Musical Stages*, Mary Rodgers talked of loving her father's songs and of that's being enough. But if so, it is also enough to make one love Larry Hart—along with his gemütlich mother and disreputable father, who in combination taught Rodgers that you could belong to a technically higher social class than his own without being the least bit respectable or bourgeois.

Unfortunately, the lesson lasted only

as long as Hart did, and the faster the great songs began to come (“Manhattan,” “Where or When,” “My Funny Valentine,” “The Lady Is a Tramp,” “With a Song in My Heart”—the list goes on and on), the faster the success and the dislocations of success came too, and in no time Hart's alcoholism was galloping toward the finish line in the manner of Dylan Thomas's and Brendan Behan's. Spurred on by a particularly disorienting trip to Hollywood in the mid-1930s, Hart started regularly disappearing for days on end, and scribbling his lyrics on envelopes and cocktail napkins, and fraying any enchantment the fussy Rodgers had ever felt for him, until probably the only thing keeping them together was the imperiturbably high quality of the lyrics. “Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered” and “Falling in Love With Love”—the scores of *Pal Joey* and *The Boys From Syracuse* were dashed off during these nightmare years as if nothing were wrong, and as if to prove that the artist within Larry Hart was ultimately just as serious and indomitable as the one inside his partner.

Then it was over, and Hart had died after literally lying in a gutter, and Rodgers, who might have done more to help him, would never get that close to anyone else again. Instead the scene seems to change sharply from a 1930s tableau of kids putting on shows together to one of those slick 1950s offices from which Mr. Big, who is now Rodgers himself, emerges in time for the 5:25 to Scarsdale every day. Songwriters need to stay in tune with their times, and even the family Rodgers returns to at night is a perfect period piece, happy on the outside, rotten on the inside, and (as Secrest reveals more tellingly than she quite seems to know) an arena in which the latest ailments and prescription drugs can slug it out in human disguise while the children, who assume that the whole thing is really about them, can start work on their own *Mommie Dearest*. In the one corner we find Dorothy Rodgers (anorectic constipation), who has turned into a raging, capricious monster—as who would not? And in the other her husband (booze and tranquilizers), who



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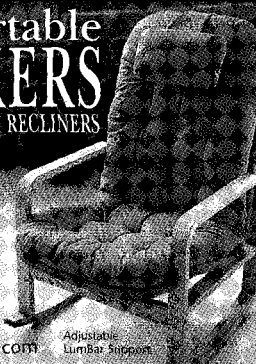
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FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveal sloppy history, which gives a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care—transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things that Jesus said. Thus the notes were probably written down at the time heard and have not suffered alteration ---the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of the notes with comments and Marcan context, thereby developing a narrative of Jesus that is tenably historical.

This *historical* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, not on Judaism with its fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws. Instead, this *historical* Jesus said, "Tell no lie and never do what you hate." This *historical* Jesus never mentioned a devil, demons, or hell.

The most radical difference, however, is that Epicureanism also shaped Jesus' thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities, and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid.

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seems permanently depressed and half stoned and who comes to life only one show at a time—just long enough to romance a new heroine, alienate the writer and the director, and kiss the whole chorus line good-bye before returning home to keep up appearances and to fail everyone all over again.

Like many tragedies, *Richard Rodgers Part II* is basically a soap opera with the stakes raised, the stakes in this case being nothing less than the future of the American musical. And the tragedy, if that's the right word, is that in the end Rodgers's lifelong attempt to merge music, words, dance, and even scenery into something like great art would be adjudged kitsch and hardly art at all. He was genuinely stunned to find that later generations preferred his earlier work with Hart. Wasn't Hammerstein supposed to be the revolutionary?

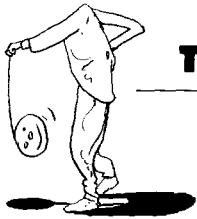
But Hammerstein, as Rodgers should have known, wasn't even facing in the right direction. Back in the 1920s, while Rodgers and Hart were already talking about a new kind of American musical, Hammerstein was still cheerfully dabbling in old-fashioned operettas like *Rose Marie* and *The Desert Song*. He obviously loved the form in all its artifice and sentimentality, and this taste would sabotage every later attempt to add realism. Are we meant to be in Iowa this time, or Oklahoma? "Durned if I know." The effects are gorgeously inauthentic, and the judgment of the sixties would be cruel.

Yet one can seldom be absolutely sure that a genius doesn't know what he's doing. Since Rodgers wasn't going to find another Hart to jam with anyway, why not try something quite different? Instead of concocting tunes for the other guy to chase, why not let *him* go first, as Hammerstein manifestly preferred, and see what that brings out in me? Any artist who wants to last as long as Rodgers did had better change

his style at least once to keep the flow going; Hammerstein's proudly corny words tapped not only a genuine new side of Rodgers but also a new aspect of his talent. Even the fertile Jule Styne expressed amazement at the speed and sureness of Rodgers's response to other people's words. Just say something like "Bali Ha'i" or "Oh, what a beautiful morning," and out would pop the perfect tune.

Songs so coolly produced could never to my mind compete with Rodgers and Hart's masterpieces. "But look at the number of them," as Sam Spade would say, and if you can forget the comparison with Rodgers and Hart, look at the quality, too. In our current melodic drought everything Rodgers ever wrote has appreciated wildly in value, and the scores for shows such as *Oklahoma!* and *The King and I* now seem like sufficient cause for uncomplicated, wholehearted hundredth-birthday celebrations. As for *Somewhere for Me*, Rodgers himself never knew where the songs came from or why, so there's no reason to expect Meryle Secrest to; and she at least wisely avoids the generic mistake of printing out the plots of his old shows. There is nothing to be found there now. But there probably is something in his life, and she has made a useful start on it. Her book is not, as one might suppose, an exercise in sheer debunking. The street version of Rodgers is actually much worse than this. Bad drunks leave bad memories, and we currently know much more about the years when Rodgers was slipping than about his heights. Secrest has righted the balance but underlined a final irony. Larry Hart, like Scott Fitzgerald, went down in flames early, and has been unequivocally admired ever since. Rodgers, like Hemingway, lived longer and crashed slowly, and Secrest's book is only the first shovelful toward digging him out. ▀

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THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Common Bond

This puzzle consists of two independent puzzles having very little in common. Each set of clues leads to a different set of grid entries; since the two sets must share the grid, solvers are advised to leave room in each square for two letters. Only a few squares contain the same letter for both puzzles; those letters should be entered one per square. When all answers have been entered in the grid, the solitary letters will be seen to form the common bond that holds everything together. One answer is an abbreviation, and nine others are capitalized.

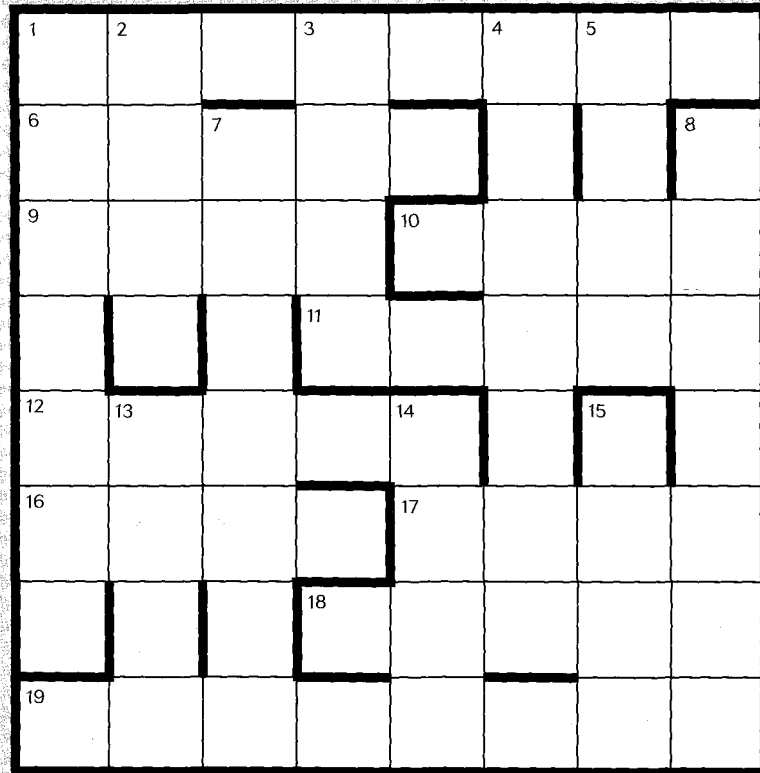
Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 105.

ACROSS A

1. Male individual given name by uncle in Shakespearean clan (8)
6. Classic love story about differences, initially (5)
9. Going far down river in Scotland, west of pass (4)
10. Clink glasses at opening Internet enterprise (4)
11. Smart, returning green, lousy eggs? (5)
12. Married in place with charm (5)
16. Sensitivity shifted to the listener (4)
17. Lake that's nothing beyond ordinary (4)
18. Cried out for drink (5)
19. Decline some poetry, accepting first of songs for shows (8)

DOWN A

1. Ways toward California town (7)
2. Spread cheer with hug (4)
3. Is upset with ends (4)
4. Woody, in a way, is reading novel (7)
5. Supported by part of group only (4)
7. Performs a pre-flight routine, maintaining five mechanisms (7)
8. Gale is swirling around restricted Mediterranean seaport (7)
13. Greek character and I circling one island (4)
14. Turned green, giving guy's name (4)
15. Victim's appeal heard (4)



ACROSS B

1. Female (i.e., girl) wrecked excellent, delicate work (8)
6. Amount of exotic hormone in Olympian's blood (5)
9. Something screwy about one dark time in Europe (4)
10. French town with English imprisoned? (4)
11. Bewildered chief of staff interrupting a meal (2,3)
12. Husband getting into jazz musician's raps (5)
16. Knock out Chinese politician in New York (4)
17. Single, you draw together in audience (4)
18. Hot, being in German state (5)
19. Gently fell down, upset about pair of final letters (8)

DOWN B

1. Particular conclusion: gross (7)
2. Copper going in is where some patients stay, briefly (4)
3. Idiot always has suggestion (4)
4. Thinks about riding, carried by equine (7)
5. Weapon's simple structure initially ignored (4)
7. Grill football player endlessly absorbed by yo-yo? (7)
8. Portrayed a decent punk (7)
13. Halt Sumerian city in time (4)
14. Canal zone getting behind petition (4)
15. Struggle, grabbing head of serpentine squeezer (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

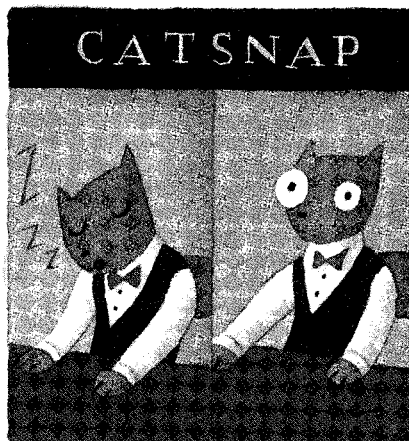
The *Atlantic's* readers seem to have worried about the authors of October's word-fugitive questions. One October question was "What do you call it when an individual nods off for a few seconds and then jolts awake?" "Nodding out and snapping back to life is the core experience of an opiate high," warned Richard Kleiner, of Las Vegas, in an ominous-looking memo sent from Intervention Headquarters at Arbitronix, where Kleiner works. Max Uhler, of Minneapolis, wrote, "This behavior is commonly seen among the gravely sick." "Tell him to see his doctor," urged Verba Weaver, of Lake Elmo, Minnesota. Addressing the author directly, Laszlo Javorik, of Oregon, Illinois, wrote, "Be careful!!! Especially if the symptoms appear together with extraordinary thirst, you may be diabetic! Get your blood sugar and your glucohemoglobin tested immediately!!!"

Many other readers wrote to suggest medical terms that might apply. We asked John Shepard, the medical director of the Sleep Disorders Center at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota, to choose among them, and he responded that *hypnic jerk* seemed to best fit the symptoms described. (He also said that the great majority of people who experience a hypnic jerk have nothing to worry about.) But of course that's medical jargon; Word Fugitives was looking for something less technical and more conversational. Martin St-André, of Montreal, Quebec, shared a local idiom: "The expression we have is *cogner des clous*, more or less translatable as 'hammering nails' or maybe 'pounding nails with one's head.'" Kim Jastremski, of Murray, Kentucky, wrote, "One of my favorite phrases in Polish describes just this kind of sleep. The Poles say to *sleep like a woodpecker*."

Stu Thompson, of Littleton, Colorado, coined *cornpecking*; Merri John-

son, of Auburn, Nebraska, *napoplexy*; Roger Barkan, of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, *snaptime*; Cindie Farley, of Pacific Grove, California, *dozedive*; Roy W. McLeese III, of Washington, D.C., *the bobs*; Seth Eisner, of Arlington Heights, Illinois, *nodding off and on*; Liz Bennett Bailey, of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, *a wake-up fall*; and Ben Crossblatt and Sara Debell, of Seattle, *kitnap*.

Taking top honors is Wayne Otto, of Middleton, Wisconsin. He was one of ten people to suggest his word, but he made the case for it both early and persuasively. "If a short, refreshing snooze



is a *catnap*," he wrote, "then a short but abruptly terminated snooze must be a *catsnap*."

The seeker of October's other fugitive wrote, "I'm terrible at transcribing numbers. To make a phone call, I have to put my finger on the number in the book and refer to it several times while dialing. Is there a word for my affliction?" Many readers admitted to suffering from the same disorder, and more than a few wrote in to suggest cures. James E. Hunter, of Camden, South Carolina, advised, "The difficulty can be solved by the simple expediency of repeating the offending telephone number ALOUD." Karen Kwa, of Hong Kong, wrote, "The problem: keypads on cal-

culators and telephones are upside-down left-right images of each other. If your letter writer is like me, who can use a calculator blindly throughout the day to key in numbers with few errors, then one partial solution is to hold the phone the other way around, such that the bottom of the keypad is now at the top."

But what about a name? Sharon S. Tonjes, of DeLand, Florida, wrote, "To borrow a term from my computer keyboard, your correspondent has a bad case of *num lock*." Two readers suggested *fourgetfulness*, and four *digititis*. Here the person taking top honors was one of six to submit the word, but she was the first: Emily Pepe, of Portland, Oregon, who came up with *dialexia*.

Now JAN FREEMAN, of Brookline, Massachusetts, writes, "We need a word for those periods in which every little thing that can go wrong does—orders get lost, the wrong washing machine is delivered, your ATM card is eaten, and so forth."

And TOM OKAWARA, of Evanston, Illinois, writes, "I'm sitting in my cubicle wondering why there isn't a word for people who send e-mail messages and then follow them up saying, 'Did you get my e-mail message?' It would certainly be nice to have a label for them."

Send words that meet Jan Freeman's or Tom Okawara's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by February 29. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent *The CEO of the Sofa*, by P.J. O'Rourke; *Free Flight*, by James Fallows; and my own Word Court.

GREG CLARKE

This is the story
of the investor who
lost \$31,701
and didn't even know it.

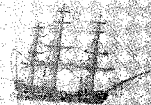


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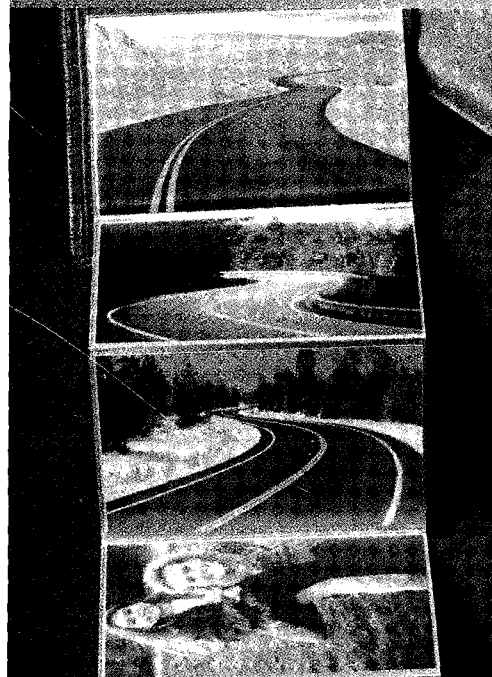
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